

when i'm alone, i'd rather be with you

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by [wishie](#)

Summary

The truth was, he had thought about Dream that way before. But there was a sharp division in his mind, a blaring klaxon declaring that Dream was off-limits. If he was being honest with himself, really honest with himself, he was a little more in love with Dream than he should be.

—

When George moves to America and meets a barista by chance, it takes him longer than he'd like to admit to realize that Dream and Clay are one and the same. By then, of course, he's in too deep.

Notes

i took liberties with the details of how they know each other and what exactly they know about each other

beta'd by @porchside! title is from "3005" by childish gambino

sometimes all i think about is you

George stepped off the plane, blinking in the light streaming through the windows of Miami International Airport. Already the humid air of the midafternoon was getting to him, sweat beading up on his forehead. The half-hour they'd held everyone back in the plane had been the worst, he'd thought then, but now, with the warm air baking him inside his hoodie, he didn't see how a pasty English boy from Brighton would be able to last more than a few days in the thick of Florida summer.

I think I finally understand your complaints about the heat, he texted Dream, tapping his fingers against the back of his phone as he stood on the escalator.

Dream's response was immediate and amused. *landed already, i see*

I don't think I'm going to last a day as an expat in this damn country, George typed, casting a glance at the airport around him, fluorescent lights flickering despite the brightness of the day. *I've seen three McDonald'ses already and i haven't even left the airport.*

welcome to america, Dream replied.

The baggage claim, thankfully, was cooler. He waited in a cluster with some tourists who were speaking loudly in Welsh accents about what they planned to do in Miami (drinking, shopping, and more drinking). His phone buzzed against his hip, once, then twice.

so where exactly are you living?

you never told me

Miami, George texted. *Why, am I near you?*

maybe

got anyone to pick you up from the airport?

George snorted. *The only people I know here are you and Sapnap, and neither of you are anywhere near me. Who exactly would be picking me up from the airport?*

The three dots popped up at the bottom of his screen, then greyed out as Dream paused on the other end. George watched his phone in between sneaking glances anxiously at the carousel, and by the time he had (with no small measure of relief) retrieved his larger suitcase, Dream had already responded.

i don't know, maybe one of your new coworkers?

Strangely enough, I don't think anyone at Conrad Holdings cares about how I get home from the airport

George chewed his lip, wondering if that was too depressing a sentiment, then sent it off before he could second-guess himself further.

sad. i'd pick you up from the airport

George laughed. *You're full of shit, Dream.*

but you love me

All George could manage was a *shut up*, more lackluster than his usual snappy responses. He could blame it on the heat, if Dream called him out on it.

whatever you say, georgie. we still streaming later?

Do I finally get to see your face?

George hailed a cab. The driver helped him load his suitcases into the trunk and, on his direction, sped off. His phone buzzed in his hand.

you wish. Dream had affixed a winking emoji to the end of his text. George tucked his phone away.

The city proper came into view, skyscrapers gleaming, palm trees zipping by his window, the pavement below the car blurring as the taxi picked up speed. He couldn't resist sending another text to Dream. *Miami is beautiful.*

isn't it?

George set down his suitcase with a heavy sigh, surveying some of the boxes and furniture that had arrived ahead of him. There was some furniture there already, but he had to... He looked at one of the boxes, helpfully labeled "COMPUTER STUFF."

He had to buy plates.

A somewhat depressing checklist in mind, he marched out of his new apartment in search of coffee. He'd be needing it, if he wanted to be settled in before nightfall.

A small coffee shop caught his eye, nestled amongst the chaos of the city. It looked cozy and old compared to the gleaming steel of the buildings around it. A small bell jingled when he pushed on the door, and the man behind the counter looked up and waved. "Welcome to Peaches," he said. "What can I get for you today?"

"What do you recommend?" George asked, surveying the chalkboard menu.

The barista straightened, and George forgot how to breathe for a minute. He was *gorgeous*, tall and broad with wavy light hair falling over sculpted cheeks and into bright, bright eyes. He tapped a finger on the counter, and George's eyes fell to his hands, which looked strong. They spoke of manual labor, and some other things, too. George felt his face warm.

"New in town?" The barista asked.

The barista's nametag—also chalk, George guessed—read 'Clay'.

"Yeah," George said, snapping out of it. "My flight just landed."

"Welcome to Miami," Clay said. He glanced behind him at the whirring espresso machines. "If you're still moving in, I'd recommend one of the double espressos. We've got a fun list of summer flavors—"

“Just cream is fine,” George said, and hoped he hadn’t sounded too rude or abrupt.

“Great,” Clay said. “Name for the order?”

“George,” George said.

“George,” Clay repeated, writing it on the cup. “Your total’s going to be five-fifty.”

George handed over the money, and Clay directed him to a small sitting area. “Coming right up.”

So George sat and watched Clay make his coffee, and when he’d handed it over with a tight smile and a “come again,” George took a sip of the—really, very excellent—coffee and resolved to come again as soon as possible.

“I don’t want to stream today,” George said, yawning. “We can test out this new plug-in I’ve been coding, and film ourselves doing it for a video.”

“Sounds good,” came Dream’s voice over the speakers, incredibly distorted with grain.

“You need to get a better mic,” George said.

“With what money?” Dream’s voice was amused. “It’s not like anyone watches our streams.”

“Sapnap does,” George protested. “And I think your five hundred fans would be very offended that you’re writing them off like this.”

“Yeah, they loved the Q&A I did last week,” Dream said.

“See?” George said. “Fans.”

Dream let out a characteristic wheeze, and George knew he was thinking of their small-but-devoted fanbase that dutifully followed them platform to platform, from YouTube to Patreon to, recently, and finally, Twitch.

“What’s the plug-in do?” Dream asked.

“Remember how I wanted to code it so that every time we took damage, our environment would shift?”

“Yeah?”

“I got it. Sort of.”

“Holy shit,” Dream said. “What are you waiting for? Start it up?”

“Get on here first,” George said, laughing. Sure enough, seconds later, Dream’s avatar was bouncing up and down in front of George’s. Dream paused in his bouncing, and a small yellow flower flew out of his inventory and landed in front of George, spinning and bobbing.

“You’re full of shit,” George said, as he always did.

“Yeah, but you love me,” Dream said, as he always did. George rolled his eyes and started the

plug-in, hitting Dream as soon as he did and watching as their environment shifted very slightly.

“The change is supposed to intensify the more damage you take,” George explained, “so if you—”

Before he could finish talking, Dream had run to a hill and jumped off, and the land around them warped into a desert.

“Like that,” George said with a sigh and a laugh.

George couldn't stop yawning. They'd finally killed the Ender Dragon, after hours of Dream throwing himself off cliffs for fun and picking a fight with the zombie pigmen specifically to take as much damage as he could without dying.

“You can't complain, you took as much damage as I did,” Dream said.

“Not on *purpose* !”

Dream snorted. “Remember the explosion plug-in? You know what they say about glass houses...” He ended his sentence on a singsong note, and George would have flipped off the camera, had his face-cam been on.

“I should get to bed,” George said. “I have work in the morning.”

“Tell the good employees of Conrad Holdings I said they're snobs,” Dream said.

“I'm not going to tell them that,” George said.

“Hey, send over the footage,” Dream said.

“Why?”

“So I can edit it,” Dream said matter-of-factly.

“It's my video,” George said, his brow furrowing. “I can edit it.”

“It's *our* video,” Dream corrected, a bit of a laugh tinging the edges of his voice. “Besides, you're a bigshot tech guy now. I have *way* more time than you do.”

“Sure you do, Dream,” George said, sending the video footage over anyway.

“Goodnight, George. Love you.”

“Yeah, yeah,” George said, ending the call and climbing into bed. The sheets were cool against his heated skin, and he was asleep before he knew it.

“Hey,” someone whispered to him.

“Hey,” he said sleepily, twisting up to meet a pair of lips pressed to his forehead, warm and inviting. “You're home. I missed you.”

“And you’ve been toasting here,” Clay murmured, sliding in beside him.

“Mm, you love me,” George said, reaching down to entwine their fingers together. Clay kissed his forehead again.

“Yeah, yeah, you know I do.”

“I love you, too,” George said, tucking his head into the crook of Clay’s neck, and Clay sighed and held him closer. George could hear the smile in his voice when he responded.

“I know.”

who got the feeling? tell me why i cry when i feel it?

Chapter Summary

George has his first day of work. Dream gets a little clingy.

Chapter Notes

i got overexcited. here's chapter 2, title is from "bleach" by brockhampton!

now with the errors removed

George woke up, staring straight up at a water stain on the ceiling, unable to remember more than a few details about his dream.

The barista from the coffee shop... feeling safe... He felt his face flush, and he rolled over. His alarm clock blinked at him. Ten minutes to seven. *Might as well get up now*, he thought, sitting up and turning the alarm clock off. He padded into the kitchen, missing his cat and desperately needing caffeine.

"You have to eat, George," George muttered with a dry smile to himself, pouring Cheerios out into one of the bowls he'd bought yesterday. He ate his cereal standing over the sink, and washed the bowl and put it in the dishwasher to dry when he was done.

"Now you have to take a shower, George," he said. The water was barely tepid and the pressure of the showerhead left something to be desired, but as he emerged, his waist wrapped in a towel, he felt more refreshed, more awake. "If only I had coffee," he muttered, wondering idly if that small coffee shop he'd visited was open. A quick Google search told him it was.

He wandered out into the sunlight, wondered if Florida was ever anything *but* sunny. Sunny, and swampy, and sweltering. The bell above the door jingled when he pushed it in, and Clay looked up with a flicker of recognition.

"Welcome back to Peaches—George, right?"

George nodded. "You're—Clay?"

Clay looked amused. "Last I checked," he said, gesturing to his nametag.

"Right," George said, flustered. "Um, just a... a medium Americano?"

"Cream?"

"Please," George said. He paid and retreated to the same seat he'd waited from the last time. He busied himself with the very delicate act of pretending that you have things to do when you don't, and texted Dream.

There are hurricanes in Florida, right?

Dream didn't respond, and George reminded himself that it was still pretty early with a glance at the time.

"George?" George looked up to see Clay extending his hand with the coffee.

"Thank you," George said. "Uh—have a nice day."

"You, too," Clay said, picking up a rag. "Come again."

George pushed out the door of the coffee shop, the bell tinkling behind him, and his phone buzzed in his pocket.

hurricane season starts in june. why? going hurricane hunting?

You're up early.

i'm at work

Texting on the job, Dream? For shame, George typed, smiling down at his phone as he walked.

'snot like my boss gives a fuck about what i do, Dream responded. *don't pretend like you won't be texting me at work.*

Who said I was going to text you at work?

i just know you, Dream said, and before George could say something sarcastic, said, *don't get caught, i would hate to get you in trouble.*

You know I'm smarter than that.

do i know you're smarter than that?

You're the one that knows me, apparently.

He waited a few more seconds, but it didn't seem any response was forthcoming, so he tucked his phone into his pocket and set out looking for his office building.

George didn't know what he'd expected when he accepted the job offer at a Floridian tech company. Certainly not bean bags in a conference room and a ping pong table in the kitchen. A ping pong table that several of his new coworkers were clustered around.

"Hey, new guy!" One of them waved him over.

"Hello," he said cautiously.

"Ooh, British," she said, her eyes widening. "That's cool. Maia, guess what? The new guy's British."

"My name's George," George said, because he couldn't think of anything else to say. Point out that they, too, had accents? Something snappy about his accent? *Joke machine broke, head empty*, his brain spat out, and he resisted the urge to rub the bridge of his nose.

“George,” Maia said, testing it out. “You need someone to show you around?”

“I’m supposed to be meeting with a Kara?” George asked, fumbling for his phone. Ten minutes to nine.

“I can take you to her!” Maia brightened and downed her coffee. “You’re going to love it here.”

“I hope so,” George said, smiling back at her.

“That’s the conference room on the left,” she said, waving at the room with the bean bags he’d noticed earlier. “The cubicles are over that way, but Kara’s office is on the west side of the floor. And... here we are!” Maia knocked on the door.

“Come in,” came a muffled voice.

“Kara—” Maia sang. “I brought you a present.”

“What is it?” Kara asked as Maia pushed open the door. “Oh, George! Fantastic, Maia, thanks so much. You can go back to your desk now.”

“Come to the kitchen later for lunch!” Maia said, bouncing a little.

“It was nice to meet you, Maia,” George said, and she beamed at him before leaving.

“Well, you’ve already met Maia, so that’s one thing done,” Kara said. She closed her laptop. “Let’s get started, shall we?”

By the time George left Conrad Holdings at six, he was drained, tired, and had even less of an understanding of why they’d brought him on the team at all. His phone vibrated against his leg, reminding him he hadn’t checked his phone since lunch.

Sapnap: (2 messages)

Dream: (14 messages)

The messages from Sapnap were predictable, just asking him when they were planning on streaming an idea they’d planned a couple weeks back. Dream’s messages were a little more interesting, and George found himself rereading them as he clung to one of the handrails of the bus.

how’s work? they killed you yet?

wow i hope not. a world without you would be pretty bleak

you still won’t say you love me, but i know you do so i can admit i’d miss you if your new coworkers killed you

i’ve been here for three hours and i already want to fucking die

wonder how your work is going. i’d know if you responded to my texts, maybe

And then, a little later: i don’t know why it’s so hard for people to read

like, just. open your eyes

what is so hard to understand about warranties and what voids them

i swear every other customer i get is someone who wants to know what we can do about their waterlogged phone

water damage has literally never been covered by applecare

no, gotta think positive thoughts

i guess if i'm being fair most of these people were very sweet

at least they weren't rude. i hate rude people

it's not that hard to be nice to the guy who's fixing your phone

George fought a smile as he read back Dream's messages, typing out a response.

I'm alive. Barely.

thank god

did you pass on my message?

What, that they're all a bunch of snobs? Not true, btw

i'll believe it when i see it

made any friends?

George paused, thinking. *There might be a couple people*, he responded, typing slowly. *I'm just trying to figure out what exactly it is they hired me for.*

aren't you a coder?

Also IT.

what does a tech company need an IT guy for?

/shrug

does this mean you're too tired to stream?

George thought about it. He thought about the days stretching ahead of him in endless unison, the slow, steady marching towards the end of a week for the rest of his life. It was only Tuesday, and he was wiped.

it's okay if you are. i think sapnap and bad were going to stream and i might hop on theirs

Fuck it, George typed. *I'll stream with you today*

fuck yeah

get home get home get home

Hold on, I'm almost there, just got to my building. George fumbled in his pocket for his keys, and clumsily, he unlocked the door.

His apartment seemed emptier than it had that morning, maybe because of the dying light that illuminated it, but George went straight to his room to start up Discord.

“Hello?”

“George!” Dream said. “Have you started the stream yet?”

“No, not yet,” George said, adjusting his headphones. “I wanted to call you first.”

“Start it!” There were some clicking sounds on Dream’s end, as Dream logged into their server.

“Chill out,” George said. “What are we even doing? Our base is done.”

“It could just be a chill stream? Let everyone know how we’re doing?” Dream suggested.

“I need diamonds anyway,” George said distractedly, clicking through the chests. “We can expand the strip mine.”

“If you don’t start streaming, I will,” Dream threatened, and George snickered.

“Hold your horses, step-Dream,” he said. Dream paused, mid-jump.

“*What?!*”

Snickering, George started the stream, smiling as five people joined instantly.

“Hey, guys,” George said. “Dream is freaking out right now, not sure why—”

“You are *such* a liar!”

“—but it’s been a few days since we last streamed, and—” he glanced over at the chat. “Oh, you want to know where I am?”

Sure enough, they were demanding to know where George’s usual setup was.

“I moved to America!” He indicated the room around him. “Dream is refusing to meet up with me —”

“C’mon, George, you know I’ll meet up with you any day,” Dream said, shifting in front of George’s avatar.

The chat was delighted.

crazy how they’re already shipping us, Dream texted him. George snickered.

“Yeah, I always thought you’d have to be bigger for that,” he said aloud.

Dream was silent for a minute, then wheezed as George realized what he’d said.

“I meant more popular,” he said quickly. “A bigger *content creator* —”

“Sure, George, sure you did—”

“—you’re one to talk, you always—”

Another teakettle wheeze.

“Piss off,” George muttered, stalking over to a tree to punch it. “I hate you.”

“You know that’s not true,” Dream sang. “You couldn’t live without me.”

“Who said that a world without me would be pretty bleak?” George said, and snickered as Dream went silent.

“Well, I wasn’t *lying*,” Dream said. George paused as his Discord pinged.

i don’t think i could live in a world without you in it

He stared at it for a second. He tabbed back out of Discord. “Anyways,” he said, glancing at the chat. “Help me expand this strip mine.”

i can run faster with no wind resistance

Chapter Summary

The work week continues. George listens to Maia's music.

Chapter Notes

it's wednesday, so regardless of me completely jumping the gun yesterday i'm updating

title from "no wind resistance" by kinneret

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I can’t believe you and Dream streamed and you didn’t *invite* me,” Sapnap said.

“Look, them’s the breaks, Nick,” George said breezily. “You snooze, you lose. And you were streaming with Bad that day, so I don’t know why you’re complaining.”

“This bromance is too much,” Sapnap complained. “You’re tearing this family apart.”

“There, there, Sapnap, you’re still our favorite child,” George said, checking the time. “I have to get to the office.”

“And I have school, but here I am, talking to you,” Sapnap said.

“School? You’re so *young*,” George said, in awe.

“Shut up,” Sapnap said. “We can’t all be old like you. Are we going to record later?”

“If I’m not too tired from work,” George said.

“Oh, sure, make time for Dream, but not your buddy Sapnap, I see how it is.”

“Fine, tonight for sure,” George compromised. “I promise, I’m all yours.”

“You better be,” Sapnap threatened. “Or else I’ll tell Dream about that dream you had about your barista.”

“I regret telling you that,” George muttered, feeling his cheeks warm. “Remind me never to tell you anything ever again.”

“Tell Clay I said hi,” Sapnap said, a hint of suggestion lilting the edges of his voice.

George sputtered. “I’ve barely traded four words with him!”

Sapnap laughed. “Sure you have. Okay, have fun at work,” he said, and George rolled his eyes, ending the call.

Just for that, I'm not going to the coffee shop this morning.

that's a loss for you, not for me, Sapnap texted him back.

I can get coffee at work. George swiped his bus card, thanking the bus driver as he stepped on.

you'll miss Clay's double espressos.

I will do no such thing. The bus gave a sudden lurch, and George toppled straight into the person beside him, who levelled a glare at him as he muttered his apologies.

He was relieved when he finally got to his cubicle, because that meant he could just focus on the tasks in front of him, which were completely random and confusingly meaningless.

"Hey, you look like you need this."

He looked up to see Maia extending a mug of coffee. "My savior," he said gratefully, taking the mug from her and taking a long sip.

"Well, I just got this from the break room, so it's not *great*, but I'd be a bad coworker if I wasn't at least a little nice to the new guy," she said with a laugh. "You need help with anything?"

"No, I'm good, it's just..." George frowned, tapping his fingers against his desk. "What exactly am I here for? I feel like all my jobs are just..."

"Pointless? Random? Yeah, we all feel like that at first." She patted his shoulder. "It'll make sense eventually, I promise."

"Thanks, Maia," George said. He fought a grimace as he drank his coffee. It really was bad.

"What are your plans for this weekend?" She asked, leaning over the edge of his cubicle.

"I'll probably just..." he paused. "Well, I sort of... stream. In my free time."

"Stream what?"

"Minecraft," he admitted. "I'll probably be editing videos all weekend."

"Wow," she said. "You famous?"

"Not yet," he said with a laugh. "That's the goal." He looked at his papers, and when he spoke again, his tone was a little depressed. "That's the dream."

"Sounds like a good dream," Maia said. "Better than mine."

"What's yours?" he asked her.

"To work here until I die, obviously," she said, then laughed. "When I was little, my dream was to be a singer."

"That's a good dream," he said. "What made you give up on it?"

"What makes you think I did?"

"You said 'was,'" George said, and she smiled.

"I do still sing," she said. "I don't think it's going anywhere, though."

“Why not?” George asked.

“I don’t know!” Maia combed her fingers through her hair.. “I have some songs on Spotify, and it doesn’t seem like they’re really going anywhere.”

“Wait, I want to listen to them,” George said.

“Okay,” Maia said, laughing nervously. “My artist name is m-x-m-toon. Don’t listen to them while I’m here, though.”

She sank back behind the cubicle. George put his headphones in, queued Maia’s songs, and got to work.

Maia was a good singer, but work was swampy. He surfaced from the piles of paper and coding at around three in the afternoon, feeling very much like he was underwater..

“You know, if you want to take the rest of the day off, you can,” Kara said. He jumped. He hadn’t seen her, but there she was, standing next to his cubicle.

“How long have you been standing there?” He asked.

“An hour,” Kara deadpanned, “but you’ve submitted enough work for three people today, so if you’re tired, you can go home. Take a nap before your wild Friday night plans.”

George almost laughed, thinking about how he’d made plans with Sapnap to record. “That’d be really nice, actually. I think I’m still jet lagged.”

“You can get a head start on fixing that,” she said. “Go home, George. Get some sleep. I’ll see you bright and early Monday morning.”

“I will,” George promised, but made a detour to the coffee shop as soon as he stepped off the bus, texting Sapnap on the way in.

Getting coffee, be ready soon

WOOHOO

George smiled at his phone and tucked it away. Clay wasn’t there (and George had to pretend to himself that he wasn’t even a little disappointed) but he dutifully bought and paid for a cold brew. As he walked into his apartment, his phone pinged in his hand with a text from Dream.

how’s the job?

Today I had to sort through lines of code and pull out all the ones that were green or red

that doesn’t sound too bad

I’m colorblind, Dream.

Dream didn’t respond for several minutes, and George could almost imagine the wheezing laugh forcing its way out of Dream’s chest.

you're right, that's terrible

I'll just figure it out

what are your plans for tonight?

I said I'd record a video with Sapnap, but he probably won't mind if you hop on the Discord

no wild clubbing plans?

George snorted. *You think I go out?*

maybe you should. you might meet somebody

At a club? No, thanks

don't knock meeting someone at a club

You don't even drink , George typed.

doesn't mean i can't go sober

Who goes to the club sober?

i like to dance

George stared at it, wondering what to say. He'd settled on *of course you do* when Sapnap texted him, and he swiped out of the conversation with a little huff.

I'm home

let's fiiiiiiiiiiilm

Get on the Discord, George responded, grinning.

"Dream might join," he said as soon as Sapnap's name lit up green.

Sapnap gave a theatric groan. "You can't even go without talking to him for one night, can you?"

George flushed. "You're one to talk."

"You're just upset because you're needy," Sapnap said, and George could just imagine the shit-eating grin he was sporting.

"Let's just start," George muttered. "I have the plug-in."

"You're only changing the subject because you know it's true."

"Shut up," George said. "I don't *have* to record with you."

"Only because you could be playing with Dream instead," Sapnap said.

There was a light *blip* sound.

"Ooh, speak of the devil," Sapnap said. "Hey, Dream."

"Ignore me," Dream said. "I'm not here."

“We haven’t actually started yet,” George said, trying to pat down his cheeks.

“Yeah, George was telling me about this dream he h—”

“*I’m starting the recording now*,” George said.

George sighed, stretching. The video had lasted longer than he’d expected, and he’d have more raw footage than he thought he would have to edit.

He peeked at Dream’s icon, still green on the Discord call though he hadn’t spoken in a couple hours.

Sapnap yawned loudly and audibly. “That was good.”

“It was,” George said agreeably. “Even though you died, like, thirty times.”

“You *caused* half those deaths!”

“Let’s not point fingers now,” he said primly, and the Discord call filled with Dream’s laugh.

“I think I’m going to head off,” Sapnap said. “I have homework.”

“Baby,” George said, yawning.

Sapnap disconnected.

“So what about that dream you had?” Dream asked. He sounded calm.

“You remember that?” George wondered if he sounded as panicky as he felt. “That was hours ago.”

“I remember,” Dream said. George winced.

“It’s nothing,” he said. “Sapnap’s just being a dick.”

The call was quiet for a few seconds.

“It’s still early,” George said.

Dream was quiet for another minute.

“We could stream a movie?” He suggested finally.

George felt a smile tug at the edge of his mouth. “What did you have in mind?”

Chapter End Notes

there goes the last great american dynasty am i right

if you can, please leave me a comment or some feedback it truly helps so much

just let me believe that you like what you're seeing

Chapter Summary

George works up the nerve to talk to Clay some more.

Chapter Notes

title from "stud" by troye sivan!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George woke up to sticky sheets. He had a suspicion that the tall, hot barista from the coffee shop he'd quickly become a regular at had been involved in his dream, but, glancing over at his phone, which showed that the Discord call between him and Dream was still going, decided now wasn't the time to sort these thoughts out.

He picked up the phone and put his headphones, previously in a state of disarray, back in. "Dream?"

"Oh, you're awake, finally," Dream said. His voice was a little garbled, like he was walking somewhere. "You talk in your sleep."

"I— *what*?" George panicked a little, thinking about the stickiness of his sheets and what he might've said.

"Yeah, I couldn't really figure out what you were saying, but you were definitely mumbling *something*."

"Oh, God," George said. "Did I... was there..." he buried his face in his hands.

"Anything embarrassing?" George could hear Dream's smile. "I don't know, was there?"

"*Dream*."

"No, nothing," Dream said, laughing. "Why, have any weird dreams last night?"

"Wouldn't you like to know," George muttered.

"Actually, I would," Dream said.

"I should take a shower," George said, glancing at the clock.

"Good timing," Dream said. "I'm on my way to work."

That explains it. "On Saturday?"

"Not all of us have high-powered tech jobs," Dream said. "Some of us work for minimum wage."

“F,” George said, yawning. “Well, have fun.”

“Get coffee or something, you sound like death,” Dream said, by way of farewell.

“Yeah, yeah, fuck you, too,” George said, ending the call.

He surveyed the mess in his sheets, most of which was thankfully confined to his pants. Though, thankfully was subjective, he thought, stripping his bed. He started a load of laundry, throwing his pants in there for good measure, before hopping in the shower.

He could edit at Peaches, he decided, pulling a hoodie on despite the heat of the morning. He could get coffee, and food, and edit his videos, and then maybe stop at the grocery store on the way home.

This plan in mind, he grabbed his laptop and his work bag and set out, only thinking coffee thoughts. It wasn't until he walked into the coffee shop that he remembered why, exactly, he'd had to do a load of laundry this morning, and why coming to Peaches that day mightn't have been such a good idea.

“Hey, welcome back,” Clay greeted him. “What'll it be?”

“Double espresso, with cream, please,” George said.

“Sure,” Clay said, pencilling it on the cup. “Anything else?”

“A sandwich, maybe?”

“Great,” Clay said, and George handed over his credit card before Clay could give him his total. “Coming right up.”

George sat down under a window and pulled out his laptop.

“—George? Hey, George.”

He finally looked up. “Sorry,” he said sheepishly, getting to the counter.

“No problem,” Clay said.

George was fully planning on just taking the items, but a little voice in the back of his throat shoved through, pushed up, and said, “When are you going on break?”

“In about an hour,” Clay said, looking surprised. “Why?”

“You want to sit with me? I'll buy you a coffee.”

Clay had stopped looking surprised and now looked merely contemplative. “Sure,” he said finally, smiling. “Since you're buying.”

George sort of smiled and scurried back to his seat. He went back to editing, but he couldn't focus. His eyes kept trailing over to Clay, working the espresso machine, chatting with customers, wiping down the counters, his dirty blond hair falling over his eyes.

He lingered on Clay's forearms, hard lines of muscle showing taut under tanned skin, and had to blink hard, turning and burying himself back into his work. He was deep into editing by the time Clay took off his apron and came to sit with him, already holding a cup.

“Oh, I did promise to pay, didn’t I?” He asked, taking off his headphones.

“I’ll add it to your total next time,” Clay said, taking a long, almost revelatory sip. George’s eyes caught on Clay’s bobbing adam’s apple as he did.

“Who says there’ll be a next time?” George asked. Clay looked as though he were about to laugh.

“You’ve been here every day this week except one,” he said. “Call it a lucky guess.”

“Every day,” George said, embarrassed. “I’ve been here every day.”

“Didn’t see you yesterday,” Clay said.

“You remembered?” George asked, a little touched.

Clay snorted. “I don’t know how many British people you think come to this shop as often as you.”

George shrugged, acknowledging it.

“What have you been working on over here?” Clay asked.

“Editing,” he said. “I’m a YouTuber. Kind of,” he amended. “No one you’d know.”

Clay frowned, studying George’s laptop. “What kind of YouTuber? Vlogger?”

“No, absolutely not,” George said. “I, uh. Play Minecraft. It’s kind of embarrassing, I know.”

Clay blinked, like this was an answer he hadn’t been expecting. “No, it’s... It’s kind of cute, actually,” he said, fiddling with his coffee sleeve. “I wanted to be a YouTuber, too.”

“What made you give up on it?” George found himself asking, for the second time in two days. Clay gave him a sly, sideways look, and for a second, George found himself trapped in that gaze, Clay’s yellowy eyes molten and melting.

And then, all of a sudden, the spell was broken, and Clay was taking a sip of his coffee, and George was wondering if he’d imagined the whole thing. “Who says I did?”

They chatted about nothing in particular for a few minutes, until Clay finished his coffee and checked his watch.

“I don’t usually flirt with my customers,” Clay said. “Just so you know.”

“Oh, I—”

“Just thought it was worth mentioning,” Clay said, smiling. “You’re very cute, George.”

“I—thank you?” George pressed his lips together, willing himself to stop blushing.

“Here,” Clay said, plucking a napkin off the table and scribbling his number on it, letting it flutter into George’s outstretched hand. Clay’s handwriting was blocky and harsh, every pen stroke belying aggression, but his expression when George looked up at him was anything but. “Call me sometime. When I’m not at work,” he said, a small smile playing around his lips.

“I—I will,” George stammered.

Clay winked at him and went back to work, and George sat on his chair for the next hour, trying

desperately to work but failing to gather his focus together, every single time.

How's work?

George stared at the message. He'd sent it a couple hours ago, long after he'd left Peaches, and now he was sitting at home, waiting for a response. He reminded himself that Dream worked two jobs. He reminded himself that there were plenty of reasons for Dream not to text. He reminded himself that he still had groceries to put away, and dinner to make, and a video to put the finishing touches on before he could finally upload it.

He messaged Sapnap, asking him to send over any footage he'd recorded the night before, before his eyes caught on the napkin with Clay's number, sitting very unassumingly on the edge of George's new dining table.

Just text him, George, a small voice in his head said. *You know you want to.*

George did want to, that was the thing. He wasn't sure if he'd wanted to text anyone that badly before. Unwittingly, his thoughts went to Dream again, to his teakettle laugh, his brazen, careless attitude, the affection in his voice when he spoke to George—

He shook his head violently, trying to snap himself out of it. Leaving the napkin where it was, he started to put his groceries away.

The truth was, he had thought about Dream that way before. But there was a sharp division in his mind, a blaring klaxon declaring that Dream was off-limits. If he was being honest with himself, really honest with himself, he was a little more in love with Dream than he should be. Dream was just *like that*, the kind of guy to flirt with his friends for a laugh, on a whim. He closed his cabinets, trying not to slam them in his frustration with himself.

Groceries put away, he came back to his phone. Sapnap had responded with something characteristically off-putting, along with the footage, and Dream had responded with *i'm tired. apple customers get stupider every day.*

That's kind of rude

Dream sent a middle-finger emoji. *you try working at applecare for a few days, and i guarantee you'll change your tune*

have you eaten yet?

No, not yet. Making some food now.

send me pics ;)

Ooh, now you're talking.

George bit his lip as he stared at his screen for a few seconds. This was unhealthy, he decided, pining after his best friend. It wasn't like he didn't have any options. Right?

He thumbed through their texts for a minute, before, finally picking up the napkin, he typed in Clay's number.

“Hi,” he muttered as he typed. “This—is—George. From—the coffee—sh—no, that’s stupid.”

“Hello,” he started again. “This—is—George. I hope—you—remember—me.” He added a smiley face at the end for good measure, and sent it before he could second-guess himself too much.

He didn’t have to wait long. Clay responded within the minute.

hey, george :)

did you end up finishing your video?

Chapter End Notes

if you liked it, let me know! :) if you have some feedback for me, also let me know!
your comments are truly the best part of my day

we'll keep falling on each other to fill the empty spaces

Chapter Notes

title from "affection" by between friends

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George had spent a lot of his time texting Clay, more time than he might've wanted to admit, had he told anyone but Sapnap about it. He hadn't wanted to tell Dream. He had considered it, had almost typed out the message, had almost asked for advice, but decided against it in the end.

He learned that Clay had a cat named Patches, that he was afraid of heights, and that when he was twelve, he'd thrown up on the floor of a train car. He hated milk, had neutral thoughts on alligators, and loved the rain, especially when it was cool.

It must be hard to live in Florida, he'd said to that.

it's easier than you might think. i can't imagine living anywhere else tbh

Talking to Clay was easy. It was almost like they'd met before, like they were picking up the threads of a conversation long-forgotten, but every day still felt new. George forgot to dread work and the monotony of his days, when he could see Clay in the morning and spend his Saturdays working in Peaches, trading smiles with Clay behind the counter.

He still hadn't shared his YouTube channel with Clay, and Clay hadn't asked about it. Late at night, George toyed with the idea of sending him a link to one of his streams, but always changed his mind before sending the message. He wasn't sure why.

While George's personal life was unfolding, Dream was going viral faster than George would've thought possible. In a month he'd gained a hundred thousand subscribers, and showed no signs of stopping. He still hadn't bought a better mic, though.

"I don't know," Dream said, when George asked. There was a rough sound, like Dream was stroking the mic cover. "I'm kind of attached to this one."

"You're an idiot," George said, rolling his eyes.

Their Minecraft Manhunt series had a devoted following, and George watched his own follower count rise accordingly.

"You might be able to quit your job soon," George said. "You have the subscribers for it."

"Maybe," Dream said. "I might miss it, though."

George snorted. "You hate working for Apple."

Dream's voice was quiet and secretive when he said, "There are other benefits."

Maybe it was something in Dream's tone, but George realized that he didn't want to know. He changed the subject instead.

“I was thinking about expanding the manhunt series,” he said. “Since you keep winning so easily.”

“How?”

“What if we included Sapnap? Two hunters versus one speedrunner,” he proposed.

There was a fuzzy silence as Dream considered this. “That’s a good idea,” he said. “I like that.”

“Sapnap will be thrilled to be included. Some of your fame can rub off on him,” George teased.

“Like it has with you?” Dream laughed, and George did too. “I don’t think I’ve ever done a video with just Sapnap.”

“And you still won’t have,” George said. Dream laughed again, a delighted sound.

“I’ll pitch it to him later.”

“I’m sure he’ll agree,” George said, clicking into Twitter.

Dream sighed in a contented sort of agreement. “Life is good right now.”

George supposed he’d have to agree.

“Your music is good,” George said the next time Maia leaned over the edge of the cubicle.

“I’m just a girl with a ukulele,” she said. “It’s nothing big.”

“I don’t know,” George said, unlocking his phone and scrolling through her music catalog. “I think you have something here.”

“What’s your YouTube channel, then?” Maia challenged. “You listened to my music, I should get to watch your videos.”

“It’s GeorgeNotFound,” George said, a little embarrassed. “I don’t normally tell people in real life, but I guess you’ve earned it.”

“Woohoo,” Maia let out a little cheer. “So…”

“So…?”

“Come out with us,” she said, leaning in closer. “It’s your fourth Friday here, and you haven’t gone out *once*.”

“It’s just not my thing,” George said.

“You don’t have to drink,” Maia said reasonably. “Just come to the bar. Hang out. You don’t even have to come to the club with us after if you don’t want to.”

“I don’t know…” George bit his lip. He’d had vague plans to text Clay and then maybe stream with Bad, but he already knew Maia was persistent and he hadn’t, at this stage, really figured out how to say no to people.

“Come on, Minecraft man,” Maia goaded. “Show me those player versus player skills you keep talking about.”

George tried to not visibly cringe. “If I come out with you, will you stop bothering me and let me finish my work?”

Maia mimed zipping her lips closed and sank back out of sight.

George put his head in his hands. *What have I got myself into?*

He was drunk, he was sure of it. The world kept shifting below his feet, and everything, darkened through the clout goggles a coworker had shoved on his face, was funny. He found himself laughing uproariously at the smallest things.

“Oh, George.” Maia was there, handing him a glass. “You are going to regret this in the morning.”

George downed it. It was water.

“You’re no fun,” he said, squinting at her. She smiled and laid a hand on his arm.

“Are you heading home?”

“I think soon,” George said, his head lolling a bit. “I don’t want to go yet.”

Maia touched his hair. “Soft.”

He smiled crookedly at her, gratified to see her blush. “You’re drunk, too.”

“A little,” she said. “Not as much as you.”

“I don’t know about that,” he said. She was leaning on him now, taking sips of her drink. The music in the bar was playing, but it sounded far away.

“Everything’s blurry,” George said.

“I’m going to call you a cab,” Maia said. She pulled away, and for a second, George mourned the loss of her warmth. “Where do you live?”

George couldn’t remember his address, so he pulled up his rent statement. “Here,” he said. “This is where I live.”

Maia called the cab, and George placed his hand on her cheek. He saw her eyes widen and dart down, but he couldn’t lean in. He just couldn’t. He sat on the curb instead. Maia sat next to him and leaned on his shoulder, and when the cab drove up and he got in the back, Maia gave the driver his address. “I have his location, so I’ll know if he doesn’t get home,” he heard her say. He couldn’t quite make out the driver’s response, but it sounded a little offended.

“Text me when you get home,” she told him. He gave her a thumbs up, and she smiled and pushed his goggles up into his hair. The cab ride was short, but it felt like forever to George. Maia had already paid, but he threw a ten over the seat for good measure as he fled the cab.

I want to call Dream, he thought with a sudden violence. I need to call Dream.

He messaged.

Dreeeeeeeeam

george?

George was still typing when his screen lit up. Dream was calling him.

“George? You good?”

“I’m great,” George said, shuffling into the kitchen. “Getting water. When are you going to bed?”

“Are you *drunk*?”

George filled up his glass. “Are you going to bed?”

“Why do you want to know?” Dream asked.

“Am I not allowed to wonder?” George asked, maybe a little too flirtily. Dream paused.

“I—no,” he said. “You’re not.”

“I just wanted to talk to you,” George said, padding into his room, then— “I miss my cat.”

“You had a cat?”

“Yeah, Luca,” George said. “He died.”

“Oh, I’m—sorry,” Dream said, then paused awkwardly. George considered how little he actually knew about Dream, then dismissed it.

“You’re my best friend, you know that?” He flopped onto his bed.

He could hear Dream’s smile in spite of the earlier harsh incredulity in his tone. “I think I do.”

“Well, you should.” George downed half the glass of water, then set it on his bedside table. “I care about you a lot, Dream.”

“I know.”

“You know I love you, even if Sober George won’t say it,” George said, babbling a little. “Sober George is anxious. It’s—”

“—too much, I know. I know you, George.”

“You do,” George murmured, manic energy forgotten. “You know me.”

There was quiet on the line. “Are you going to be okay?”

“‘M tired.”

“You should go to sleep, then.”

“Are you going to sleep?”

“Probably not,” Dream said. “I have our latest manhunt to edit. You drinking water?”

“Yeeeeeees,” George said, holding the word out for longer than necessary.

Dream snorted. “Get more.”

“Yessir,” George said, clumsily getting out of bed.

“And get aspirin, too,” Dream said. “Put it by your bed.”

“Ah, you’re so smart,” George said, fumbling for the bottle in the darkness of his kitchen. “Smart Dream.”

“I wouldn’t be famous if I weren’t,” Dream said, with a light laugh. “Get some sleep, George.”

“Can I—” George stumbled over his words. “Can I text you in the morning?”

“Always, George,” Dream said. “Sweet dreams.”

“Sweet *dreams*,” George giggled and pressed the end call button.

He fell asleep, his head filled with Dream’s voice and a sea of endless blue pixels, undulating and shifting as Dream spoke, tender in his thoughts.

It wasn’t until the next morning that he remembered he hadn’t texted Clay at all.

Chapter End Notes

a little shorter, a little sweeter, but with the same two stupid idiots we know and love.
if you liked it (or if you didn't) leave a comment! reading them is always the best part
of my day, and i try to respond to every comment y'all leave :)

also got some DNF one-shots in the works, so keep an eye out for those!

she said my spirit doesn't move like it did before

Chapter Notes

happy thanksgiving, friends :) chapter title is from "cringe" by matt maeson

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Clay: (2 messages)

Maia: (1 message)

Sapnap: (2 messages)

Dream: (1 messages)

George woke up, blinking blearily into the bright light streaming through his windows. He made to sit up, then groaned as his head protested at the movement. He fumbled for his phone, then squinted at all the messages piled up on his screen, a combination of Discord messages and texts.

Clay: i wonder what birds think when they see airplanes

Clay: probably bad things if you think about how often they collide

Maia: did you get home safe?

Sapnap: *Somebody* told me you were drunk last night

Sapnap: Anything fun happen? ;)

Dream: message me when you wake up

He decided to respond to the messages in the order of the least headache-inducing, starting with Maia.

I did get home safely, thank you for calling me an Uber :)

Last night was fun, we should do that again

She heart-reacted the messages, but didn't otherwise reply, which George was pretty sure he

appreciated.

To Clay, he said *I'd imagine it's how they feel when they see larger birds?*

Clay responded instantly. *you'd think they'd know the difference between a larger bird and a massive hunk of metal*

Birds are stupid, George said, and Clay reacted with a thumbs up.

you coming to peaches later?

Feeling a little under the weather, George responded. *I promise you I will make it if it is physically possible*

if you're sick stay home dude lmao i don't need to see you that bad

George laughed and sent Clay a little heart.

actually, Clay said, *i need to go to costco today. want to come with?*

I'll meet you outside Peaches after your shift :)

He looked at what Sapnap had said and sent off a middle-finger emoji. Finally, he paused on Dream's message, settling for *what happened last night?*

do you not remember?

Not really, George typed out. *I only remember one of my coworkers putting me in an Uber*

oh

you called me

George stared at the message. He felt like he did that a lot when it came to Dream. He looked away and noticed he'd left out two little aspirin tablets. He looked back at his phone, suddenly aware there was something he was missing. Carefully, carefully, he drafted his response. *I don't really remember that. I'm sorry.*

it's fine

i was just a little worried

you don't drink that often

I don't know if I'm ever drinking again, George responded. *I feel like death.*

i'm sure you smell like death too

Fuck you, George typed, and felt the energy between them return to something more comfortable as Dream sent a pleading emoji.

You want to record later?

as long as you're feeling okay

Maybe in the evening then. I need more videos lol

He set his phone down and sniffed himself. Dream was right, he needed a shower.

Once he'd showered, he felt marginally more human, and he scrolled through Twitter as he waited for the kettle to boil, liking a few tweets. Someone had drawn fanart of him and Dream, and he retweeted it.

Maybe he would go to Peaches. He didn't have anything else to do—all his videos were edited and waiting in the queue, for once, and there was really nothing else in his apartment save windows and blank, empty walls.

Did you see the fanart of us?

yeah, we're cute ;)

Haha of course we are

Dream Retweeted your Retweet

(George had to bite back a smile as he typed out a tweet.)

GeorgeNotFound: OMG Dream retweeted me I'm famous

Dream liked your Tweet

"I didn't know you had a car," George said, walking around to the passenger side.

Clay grimaced. "She's the bane of my existence. I can't afford a better one."

"She's got character," George said, tracing a long scratch on the door. "I like it."

"Just get in," Clay said. "You'll have to jiggle the handle a bit."

"You've promised me a trip to Costco," George said. "I'd hate for you to be unable to deliver."

"Just put your seatbelt on," Clay said.

"Why, are you an unsafe driver?"

"I'm very reactive," Clay said expansively, barely looking behind him as he sharply reversed and accelerated out of the lot. "I'm a *defensive* driver."

By the time they got to the Costco, George was gripping the panic bar for dear life. As soon as Clay parked with a final *screech*, his hands scrabbled with the seatbelt and he practically dived out.

Clay clucked his tongue. "You're being dramatic."

“I think I had a heart attack on the way here,” George said, patting his chest to make sure it was still there. It was.

“If you start kissing the ground, I won’t get you a hot dog,” Clay said, smirking.

“I think I understand why your car is as dented as it is,” George muttered, shading his eyes. Clay made to tousle his hair, and George jerked away.

“Just because I’m sho—*average height* doesn’t mean I’m a child,” he said, and Clay let out a sound that was halfway between a laugh and a cough.

“You’re short,” he said.

“I’m average height,” George said automatically, pinching the sleeve of Clay’s hoodie. “Just because I’m not the Green Giant—”

“—I’ll get you for that—”

“—you can try.”

“Oh, was that a dare?”

George only grinned cheekily. They ribbed each other the whole way in, but George felt a little restless, like there was an itch under his skin he couldn’t scratch.

“I don’t really need much,” Clay said, looking sheepish. “I usually come here as an excuse to get food. Wait here?”

While Clay was queuing up for the counter, George pulled out his phone to text Dream. *I think I’m on a date.*

oh, really?

George tapped his fingers on the top of his phone. *What do you do on dates, I haven’t been on one in so long*

what if you.....kissed

Omg shut up, George typed, smiling in spite of himself.

just be yourself. i’m sure it’ll be fine

who wouldn’t want to date a cutie like you

For the nteenth time, George cursed his complexion for showing his blushes so easily, but frowned, wondering if he was imagining the sharpness of Dream’s texts. He decided he was and sent off a smiley face before putting his phone away. Over in the line, Clay was brusquely shoving his own phone in his pocket, something similar to a grimace on his face.

“Everything okay?” George asked when Clay appeared, hands laden with food.

“Yeah, fine,” Clay said dismissively. “Work stuff. Here.” He threw a hot dog at George, who caught it easily.

“Can I ask...?” George said, cocking his head.

“It’s nothing, I promise,” Clay said, shaking his head. When he frowned down at his unwrapped hot dog, though, George balled up the paper from his straw and blew it at him.

“Did you just—” Clay looked at the little ball, which had fallen out of his hair. “Did you just blow a spitball at me?”

“Who, me?”

“I’ll get you for that,” Clay said, without making any move toward him.

George gave him a slow smile. “I look forward to it.”

Clay returned with a measuring look, then frowned at his hot dog again. “I’m sorry, I’m just a little distracted.”

“I think I got that,” George said, with a small smile. He thought of Dream, and pressed his lips together. “I guess my mind is elsewhere as well.”

“You weren’t feeling good this morning, right?”

George, who had just taken a rather large bite, chewed and swallowed before responding. “I might be coming down with something.” His cheeks pinked at the lie, but Clay didn’t seem to notice.

“Ew,” Clay’s nose crinkled. “Cooties.”

“You have cooties,” George grumbled.

“Yeah, but you *like* me—” Clay sang.

“Yeah, I do,” George said, and watched as Clay’s expression grew softer, and somehow, more distracted. “Hey,” he said, waving his hand in front of Clay’s face.

Clay looked at him with that same gentle expression. “I’m sorry,” he said, setting down his food. “I’m a million miles away today, I know. I think I’m just tired.”

It sounded like a lie, but George accepted it without complaint. “If you just want to take me home...”

“Who said I was taking you home?” Clay teased, and George gave him a look. “Of course I’ll take you home.” He dragged a hand down his face. “Can we rain check? Sometime I’m not too distracted. I have a day off coming up soon and maybe we can do something.”

“Maybe we can go to Disney World,” George suggested, half-joking, and Clay laughed.

It was funny, George thought as he got into Clay’s car and grabbed for the panic bar. For a second there, when Clay had laughed, he had almost sounded like—

Chapter End Notes

if you liked it (or if you didn't), please leave a comment! i appreciate you all so much and i love reading your theories and reactions <3

you're running through my mind with a shotgun

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "window" by still woozy!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Fuck, why did I agree to do this?” George asked, dragging a hand down his face.

“Because you love me?” Dream suggested.

“You wish,” George muttered.

“Because you haven’t uploaded anything in a week?” Sapnap said.

“That’s probably closer to the truth,” George said. He was hunched over his computer, trying to finish a few last lines of code for the plug-in he, Sapnap, and Dream were supposed to be testing.

“What does this plug-in do?” Sapnap asked.

“Cursed things,” Dream said, before George could speak.

“What does it actually do?” Sapnap asked.

“No, Dream was right,” George said distractedly, frowning at his monitor. He cursed as he realized he’d mistyped, and deleted a line of code.

“Cursed things?”

“Yeah, sure, like, everytime you shoot an arrow, it shoots in a random direction, and some other fun things I’m coding in that Dream doesn’t know about.”

“There are other things you’re coding that I don’t know about?” Dream said in disbelief.

“It’s also going to be a manhunt video,” George said. “Might even the odds a bit.”

“I hope so,” Sapnap muttered. Their last manhunt, Dream had won rather embarrassingly after about forty minutes.

“I’m looking forward to slaughtering the two of you,” Dream said smugly.

“Sure,” George said. “That’s going to happen.”

“Are you going to tell me what this plug-in does?” Sapnap asked.

“No, that’d be cheating,” George said, saving the code. “I’ll tell you what Dream knows, though.”

“I *guess*,” Sapnap said, heaving a sigh.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Dream said. “What if I hunted the two of you?”

“Absolutely not,” George said.

“Absolutely not,” Sapnap echoed.

“But I wanna,” Dream said.

“No,” George said. He stared at the last empty lines in complete and total frustration, rubbing his temples. “Can I finish this later? I have a headache.”

“Yeah, of course,” Dream said, joking tone laid aside for the moment. “If you want to rest and not record—”

“No, I still want to hang out with you,” George said.

He could hear Dream’s smile when he said, “Get on the SMP, then. We still have houses to finish.”

They all moved to the SMP Discord, where Bad was, evidently, streaming.

“Oh, it’s you all. Say hi to my stream.”

“Hi to my stream,” George said automatically, at about the same time that Sapnap did.

“You suck,” Bad said.

“Dream, is it true you’re getting Minecraft married for a video?” Sapnap asked.

“Oh, you saw that?” Dream said. “George got married,” he said, as if that were his only reasoning.

George laughed. “I’m looking forward to the wedding,” he said. Dream wheezed a little bit.

“My chat’s asking why you guys haven’t gone on a Minecraft date yet,” Bad said.

George snorted. “You think I’d date *Dream*? As if.”

“George doesn’t want to admit we’re meant for each other,” Dream said. “It’s okay, though, he smells too bad for me, anyway.”

“I already have my American residency,” George said. “What do I need you for?”

George dissolved into giggles. As he subsided, he *did* think about how it was a little weird that he and Dream, for all their joking about Minecraft dating, they’d never actually followed up on the jokes.

Then again, you didn’t fake-marry someone you were actually into on a lark. He could just imagine how torturous that would be on his system to go through the motions of marrying Dream in-game, to set up a Minecraft date. George knew that if he’d put real effort into any fake date he and Dream had, it wouldn’t have been innocently joking. Or platonic.

He shook himself out of these thoughts. Bad was talking.

“Dream, say you love George.”

“I love George,” Dream said, automatically. Bad gasped in delight. George tried to ignore the little flutter in his stomach.

"I'm not saying it back," George said.

"Ophelia_93 wants to know if George loves Dream," Bad said.

"He says he does," Dream said, snickering. "He says it all the time off-camera."

George flushed, but didn't bother denying it. He didn't know about *all the time*, but he'd definitely said it at least once or twice.

"He's a shy little muffin," Bad said.

"Yeah, George is shy," Sapnap said. "Dream, where's the love for me?"

"I love you, Sapnap," Dream said, much more sarcastically. "I cannot stop thinking about you. You are always on my mind, all the time. Kiss me, you fool," he finished, dramatically, shifting up to Sapnap. George was sure that if he could, he would've thrown himself at Sapnap's feet.

Sapnap laughed. "That's what I'm talking about."

Sapnap and Dream continued to bicker, Bad continued to talk to his stream, and George's heart was warm and full as he listened to his best friends, content.

George went into Peaches almost every morning to chat with Clay, their fingers brushing over the register.

"I missed you yesterday," Clay would say when George missed a morning.

And George would stammer, and he'd blush, and Clay would grin at him and give him a free pastry.

It was comfortable, but George frequently got the sense that Clay was holding back. He would bite his lip, in evident frustration or apparent distress, and George would reach over and very lightly touch the back of his hand, and the furrow of his brow would ease and he'd look up at George with that gentle expression George had come to learn.

It felt like everyone in his life was reaching some peaking point: Sapnap was stressed about upcoming finals, Bad had quit his job and was searching for a new one. Even Dream had seemed frustrated as of late, leaving streams early and posting videos on a more haphazard schedule.

Dream revealed precious little about his life, but occasionally, he dropped something into conversation, as casually as anything. "I think I might quit my job soon," he said one night, after their stream ended.

"You're almost at a million," George said.

"I'm making more on YouTube and Twitch than both of my jobs give me combined," Dream said, his voice tight and strained.

"I already knew you worked at an Apple store, but what's your other job?"

"I've never told you before?" Dream asked, sounding surprised.

“I don’t think so.”

“I’m a barista,” Dream said. There was a small itch in the back of George’s head, then, a little nagging voice telling him something, but the feeling went away as Dream continued speaking. “I like it a little more than working for Apple.”

“Why?” George asked, curious. “I would’ve thought it’d be the other way around. You don’t even *like* coffee.”

He could practically *hear* Dream’s shrug. “I drink coffee on shift. And it’s not really about the work.”

“...Isn’t it?” George asked, furrowing his brow, and Dream had changed the subject.

Aside from that, his own assignments at work were ramping up, and George found himself staying later and later every day. He wondered when everything in his life had gotten so vague. It was like he was wrapped in some large plot that he couldn’t see, and finding each thread was getting harder and harder.

One night, swaddled in frustrations he couldn’t see, he texted Clay. *Are you still up?*

is this a booty call?

Haha, no. You want to go to the beach?

There was a pause. *it’s midnight.*

So?

Another pause. *i didn’t think you were the kind of person who went to the beach late at night*

There’s a first time for everything, right?

One last pause.

i’ll be in front of your apartment in fifteen

bring swim things.

Chapter End Notes

been kind of a rough week, so just decided to upload early.

as always, please leave a comment if you can—I love reading them, and i try to respond to every single one!

now i'm feeling your breathing slow

Chapter Notes

i heard you were looking for the Midnight Beach Date

chapter title from "lights down low" by MAX!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

True to his word, Clay was idling in front of George's apartment exactly fifteen minutes later, fingers tapping restlessly on the steering wheel.

"I feel like a teenager," Clay said, by way of greeting.

"Is this what Florida teenagers do? Go to the beach at night?"

"Do teenagers in Brighton *not* skinny dip in the nearest body of water they can find?" Clay asked, giving George a side-eye as he sped off, George reaching up for his trusty handle.

"If it was warm enough, I suppose," George admitted. "Mostly teenagers in the UK just get drunk."

Clay laughed a little. "That's the same everywhere."

They fell into a comfortable silence. Clay was playing some chill hip hop song out of his speakers, and George found himself humming, a tuneless, toneless hum.

Clay's fingers flexed on the wheel. He was driving more sedately, for once, and George slowly relaxed his grip on the panic bar. Clay grinned. "I'm not going to kill you tonight."

"I'm concerned that you said *tonight*," George said, letting go of the panic bar altogether.

Clay didn't look at him again, but there was a smile playing around his lips.

When they got out of the car, the night was mild, and the sky was dotted with tiny stars. The sand was soft and warm beneath George's feet, and he inhaled the crisp scent of a light sea breeze. The moon was nearly full, and it gleamed off of Clay's hair (and probably off his own skin, George thought).

"You brought your swim stuff, right?" Clay asked, stripping off his shirt.

George tried not to stare. "I did."

"So what are we waiting for?" Clay was nearly bouncing. He looked like a little kid, hyper and endearing, and if George wasn't looking at him before, he certainly wasn't looking now. He yanked his shirt off and threw it vaguely in the direction of Clay's.

"Anything to say, George?" George peeked out of the corner of his eye. Although Clay's tone was joking, his expression as he appraised George was anything but, and George found himself grateful that the darkness hid his blush.

"Shut up," George muttered. "It's not enough that you have to be tall, you also have to be hot?"

Clay, normally so confident, looked almost speechless. “Race you to the water,” George said, before Clay could put himself together, and took off.

Clay easily overtook him, though, and was sitting by the water when George jogged up.

“I expected you to be in by now,” George said.

“Just because I won doesn’t mean I didn’t want to wait for you,” Clay said. “This is your first time at the beach, right?”

George ignored him and dipped a toe in. “It’s warm,” he said in surprise.

“It’s Florida,” Clay said, shrugging, like that explained everything. “It’s always warm.”

George was too transfixed by the moon glimmering on the water to notice when Clay scooped him up and threw him in.

“Dre—Clay!” George sputtered, more out of shock than anything else, and then his heart all but stopped as he realized what he’d nearly called Clay. Clay didn’t seem to have noticed, and swept George over his shoulder before dunking him.

“You’re just so light,” Clay laughed, and George made a half-hearted attempt to punch him.

“If I catch a cold, it’ll be your fault,” George complained. Clay made an incredulous noise.

“Catch a cold? Right now?” He made a show of looking around. “In the dead of Florida summer? It’s okay, though,” he said, stepping a little closer to George. “I’ll keep you warm.”

George looked away, embarrassed, and scooped up some water in his hands, watching it trickle back down. “This is one thing I don’t miss about the UK,” he said. “It’s never this warm in the water.”

“What do you miss about the UK?” Clay asked.

“Lots,” George said, and his heart clenched. “I guess I miss my mum the most, but... I miss my house. I miss my cat. There was a little coffee shop near my house, and I miss the lady who owned it.”

Clay made a little sound, and George nudged him.

“Of course, I have a pretty good replacement here.”

Clay laughed quietly. “I’m nowhere close to owning a coffee shop.”

“When I was six that was all I wanted to do,” George said. “All because of that little old lady. She always gave me free croissants.”

Clay looked sidelong at him. “Am I just your replacement little old lady, then?”

“What? No.” George splashed a little water at him.

“What am I, then?” Clay asked, and George realized, not for the first time, how close they were, how *warm* Clay was. He radiated heat like a forest fire, and George felt drawn to him, helplessly, magnetically.

“I, uh...” George stammered a little, and Clay leaned in. His hand brushed George’s waist, snaking

up to cup the back of his neck.

“Can I kiss you?” Clay murmured, so quietly George nearly had to lean in to hear it.

“Please,” George said, the word leaving his mouth as a breath.

Clay’s lips were soft, and he tasted like mint. George ran a hand down Clay’s arm, rested it on his waist, breathed him in. He smelled like salt, and sandalwood, and he kissed George gently, cautiously, like the world would come apart if he pushed any harder.

When Clay broke away, his expression was filled with soft wonder, though there was something troubled about his expression. George reached up and touched his brow.

“What’s on your mind?” He asked. Clay shook his head.

“It’s nothing,” he said, and his forehead relaxed. George brushed his fingers over Clay’s lips and stepped away.

“I think I’m done on water for the day,” he said lightly. “Shall we get out?”

They lay in the sand, shoulder to shoulder. George knew it must be getting very late, but he couldn’t find it in himself to care as Clay pointed out constellation after constellation.

“Let’s see if you were paying attention,” Clay said. “Which one’s Cygnus?”

“I think it’s that one,” George said. Clay hummed. “Which one’s your favorite?”

“I like Orion,” Clay said. “You remember where it is?”

George stared up into the sky, then pointed. “Is it that one?”

“You got it,” Clay said.

“Why Orion?” George asked.

Clay hummed again, wrapping his fingers around George’s still-outstretched wrist. “Orion is... it’s about catching a stroke of good luck after working hard to succeed. I’ve always been the kind of person to chase my dreams, and I’ve worked hard my entire life in this just, singular pursuit, you know?”

George blinked up at the sky. “So Orion reminds you of...”

“...myself?” Clay finished. “Yeah, I guess it does. It’s...” He laughed a little. “It’s supposed to indicate positive change coming in your life, if you believe in that.”

“Do you?”

“Not really.” Clay’s fingers tensed on George’s wrist, and he sounded a million miles away. “But I guess I’ve been pretty lucky lately.”

George smiled. “That’s good.”

“Hey,” Clay said. “It’s a shooting star. Make a wish.”

George turned to look at Clay, the moonlight casting a soft glow on his face, and didn’t think he’d seen anything more beautiful before. “I think I know what I’d wish for,” he said, and leaned forward to bridge the distance between them. Clay cupped George’s jaw as they kissed, soft and achingly tender.

“Why does it feel like I’ve known you before?” Clay whispered, eyes searching George’s face. “You seem so familiar somehow.”

“Just some more of your luck, I guess,” George quipped. He reached for Clay’s hand. “I know how you could get luckier.”

Clay blinked, and all at once, his expression got more guarded.

“I—sorry,” George said, realizing he’d entirely misread the situation. “I didn’t mean—”

Clay let go of his wrist. “It’s okay.” He bit his lip, looking both contemplative and conflicted. “I just—I can’t.”

“Oh,” George said. “Is it—is it something I did?”

“No,” Clay said adamantly, shaking his head. “It’s not your fault, and if you apologize, I’m going to throw you back in the ocean.”

“Glub,” George said, just to be funny. It fell a little flat, but Clay was still smiling at him, so he counted it as a win.

“Dream,” George said, surprised. “What are you doing here?”

Dream stood in front of him, a personification of his Minecraft avatar. His mask gleamed, stopping right above his mouth, and the moonlight cast odd shadows on his hoodie.

“You tell me,” Dream said. The smiley face on Dream’s mask was taunting him, George decided. There was no way ceramic could look that smug.

“I don’t know why you’re here,” George said.

“I think you do,” Dream said, and crossed over to George, standing right in front of him. Leaves crunched beneath his feet. Dream set down the torch he was carrying and lifted his hands up to his face.

Without meaning to, George stopped him.

“Don’t you want to see, Georgie?” Dream said, his voice low, soft, and dangerous.

“I do,” George said. “I...”

Dream waited patiently, smiling. The smile looked positively feral. “You know why I’m here, George.”

“Because...”

“Tell me why,” Dream said, the words a challenge.

George turned Dream’s hands over. They were large hands, and they looked strong. Belatedly, he realized he was shaking, though Dream seemed steady. Slowly, he let go, and reached up. Dream’s mask came off in his hands easily, revealing Dream’s face. Lightly freckled. Yellowy eyes, and a manic smile that turned gentle as Dream took him in.

Dream leaned in and kissed him, and as he did, he disintegrated into little, glittering pixels, each one sparkling by and vanishing, until George was left standing in a forest, holding Dream’s mask, at a loss for words, a torch flickering out at his feet.

Chapter End Notes

leave a comment if you liked it, or if you didn't! i try to respond to everyone's comments :)

can you see me using everything to hold back?

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "bags" by clairo!

according to ao3 statistics, only a small percentage of people who read my fics are actually subscribed, so if you end up liking this chapter, consider subscribing! it's free, and you can always change your mind. enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George woke with a start.

His alarm clock was blinking in his peripheral vision. Four in the morning. He let himself fall back onto his mattress with a heavy thump. *What the fuck was that?*

His dream was already fading, but he could still remember the press of lips on his, something cool to the touch and tangibly heavy in his hands.

He rolled over, trying to hold on to the fragments of his dream, but they slipped away, one by one, until he fell back into an uneasy sleep.

When George went into Peaches, Clay met his gaze with a tense smile. "Hey," he said. "Can we talk?"

"Right now?" George asked.

Clay looked around the empty coffee shop. "Yeah. I'll..." He grabbed a trash can behind the counter. "I'll take this out."

George followed Clay into the back alley, and when Clay sank to the ground, his knees to his chest, George sat, too.

"I'm sorry," Clay said. "I didn't mean to drag you into my mess."

George, who had been trying to remember his dream since he'd woken up earlier that morning, was startled out of his thoughts. "What?"

"I don't think I can do this," Clay said.

George shook his head, feeling like he was underwater. "What?"

"This," Clay said, gesturing between the two of them.

"Is it something I did?" George asked, for the second time in two days.

“No,” Clay said. “I guess I just don’t really know what I want?”

“Is there someone else?” George asked. (In his experience, there usually was.)

Clay shifted. “Sort of, yeah.”

George nodded. “It’s okay,” he said. “Friends?” (In the back of his head, he replayed the memory of their last kiss, salty with seawater and hands pressing sandy promises into damp shoulders, and felt very, very tired.)

Clay gave him a weak smile. “Yeah. I’m sorry.”

George thought about bumping his shoulder, but didn’t. “As long as we’re still on for laser tag.” He got to his feet and held out a hand to help Clay up. “And as long as you don’t ghost me.”

Clay’s smile was a little more real when he said, “Of course not.”

Clay continued to text. Small things, little memes and pictures from his day, so George wasn’t too bothered, especially as work was also ramping up. It now resembled what George had *thought* working for an American tech company would be like, with late nights and earlier mornings. The only time George had for Minecraft was now in the early hours of the morning, when he joined his friends’ streams in order to spew incoherence.

His phone buzzed on his desk. *you want to stream later?*

I’m really tired, George responded.

we can just call? watch a movie? whatever you want

George stifled a smile and looked at the clock. It was six PM, past quitting time, but not by much. Tired eyes trailed over the piles of paper littering his desk. Around the office, everyone was quietly working their overtime.

He looked again at his desk and made up his mind. Grabbing his bag, he made his way over to Kara’s office. “I’m clocking out,” he said.

Kara barely looked up. “You’ve used all your overtime for the week?”

“Yes.” George was certain of this.

Kara waved an uncaring hand. “Go ahead. It’s Friday. Do something fun, take a nap.” She combed out her hair with her fingers compulsively; she didn’t seem to realize she was doing it. “Honestly, I might tell everyone to go home now. We’re ahead of schedule, and I really hate working everyone this hard...” She bit her lip, seemingly lost in thought, then looked up at George. “You’re still here?”

George fled.

"I'm going to quit my jobs," Dream said. His audio quality was particularly bad today, and George had to struggle to make him out. "On Friday, or. Maybe next week."

"Really?" George stopped short, in the middle of breaking a diamond ore. "You're actually going to quit?"

"I don't need the money from them anymore," Dream said. His avatar punched George empty-handed. "I'm famous now, didn't you hear?"

"And yet you still won't give your fans the face reveal they're clamoring for," George said. "Think of the *fans*, Dream. Your poor fans."

Dream snorted. "My fans are salivating over pictures of my hands. I think they're fine."

"They're nice hands," George murmured, thinking again of his dream.

"Aw, George, I knew you loved me," Dream teased, running around him to steal the diamond ore.

"I don't," George said, hitting Dream with his pick. "Just your hands." It slipped out before he could stop it, and he felt his face heat up.

"My hands are a *part* of me," Dream said.

"A small part," George muttered. "Give me my diamond."

"You snooze, you lose," Dream said smugly. "It's my diamond now."

"I could be sleeping right now," George complained, moving to start another strip in the mine.

"You snooze, you lose," Dream repeated. "What do you think Sapnap is doing right now?"

"...Snoozing?"

"Losing," Dream said, punching George, this time with the diamond.

"I don't know why I talk to you so much," George said.

"It's because you love me," Dream said, and George had to concede defeat.

"I think I'm done with Minecraft for tonight," George said, a few quiet minutes later, staring down the dark shaft of the mine he'd dug.

"Are you done with me, then?" There was a small popping sound, like Dream was stretching, and he yawned.

Never, George thought. "I don't know," he said, shutting down his computer. "I could chat for a bit."

"Okay," Dream said, and yawned again. "I'm going to take some melatonin."

"Are you still having trouble falling asleep?" George asked, climbing into bed. "Hold on, I'm switching headphones."

"Yeah," Dream said. George could hear pills rattling. "The melatonin's been helping, though."

There was a rustle of sheets on the other end. “I’m sleepy,” George said, snuggling down into his own covers.

“I feel like I haven’t heard a lot from you lately,” Dream said.

“That’s because work’s been mad,” George said. “It’s a real clown car in there, all the time.”

Dream laughed quietly. “Maybe you should quit, too.”

George made a small noise of incredulity. “I’m not famous.”

Dream smiled. George could hear it in his voice when he spoke. “You’re the one with almost a million,” he said.

“Sorry, and who has nearly five million?” George asked. “Who’s quitting his job because he’s self-sufficient on YouTube and Twitch?”

“I’ve been freelance coding, too,” Dream admitted. “I just want out of this capitalist rat race.”

“I thought you said there were benefits to your coffee shop job,” George said.

“Nothing that outweighs the benefits of *this* job,” Dream said. “And... I dunno, I might’ve been wrong.”

George waited for his beating heart to subside, and he decided to probe. “What if you weren’t?”

Dream was quiet for a minute, and when he spoke, it was in his usual light tone. “What do you know about the horrors of customer service, anyway?”

“It’s for the best,” George said. “You can be the crackhead Florida man of BuzzFeed’s wet dreams.”

“Buzzfeed *wishes* I would be the crackhead Florida man of their wet dreams,” Dream muttered.

“You’re one to talk about capitalist rat races, though,” George said. “You’ve got your own merch store now.”

“Don’t you have merch? You should have merch. You’re famous enough.”

“I’m waiting to do a face reveal first,” George said, patting down his flaming cheeks.

“Why haven’t you?”

“I will when I hit a million,” George said. “Why haven’t *you* ?”

Dream huffed. “You know why.”

“I don’t really,” George said. “Unless it’s privacy.”

“Got it in one,” Dream said. “I don’t really like the idea of—” He paused, seeming to fumble over his words.

“—people doxxing you and showing up in real life to your home and your work,” George finished for him.

“They’re already thirsting over pictures of my hands, George.” Dream exhaled, long and shaky.

“It’s funny, sure, but it’s also a little scary.”

“I know you love your fans,” George said gently.

“I do,” Dream said. “They’ve given me *everything*, George.”

“You’re the internet’s white boy of the month,” George said.

“I only want to be your white boy of the month,” Dream said. There was a moment of silence, and then Dream wheezed, and George was laughing too, a little heartsore and a little relieved.

Dream sighed through his laughter. “God, I wish I could’ve seen the look on your face.”

“I wish I could see your face,” George said, softly. His heart beat in double-time, an unsteady drumbeat of a march to nowhere.

Dream was silent.

“Sorry, I shouldn’t have said anything,” George said.

“It’s okay,” Dream said.

“I keep doing that, lately,” George said. “Pushing the—”

“No,” Dream said. “I know it’s my fault we haven’t seen each other’s faces before.”

“Sapnap’s seen your face,” George said.

“That’s true,” Dream said.

“Why...”

“I don’t know,” Dream said. “It’s...” He paused. “It’s different. *You’re* different, I guess.”

“Oh,” George said.

“It’s not like that,” Dream said. “Sapnap is... we practically grew up together. He’s like my little brother. But you’re...”

“I’m...?”

“You’re not my little brother,” Dream said. George could hear the smirk in it. He rolled his eyes.

“Well, obviously. It’s because you get shy, isn’t it?” He asked, teasing.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Dream said. “You make me shy.”

George blinked down at his keyboard. He opened his mouth, then closed it again.

“You’re my best friend,” Dream murmured.

“You’re mine, too,” George said faintly. His chest felt tight.

all jokes aside if you could leave a comment i'd appreciate it so much! i try to respond to every one i get, and your comments are the best part of my day :)

all i know, all i know, loving you is a losing game

Chapter Notes

i was so, so, so incredibly sick of finals that i decided to post today instead of tomorrow. not a lot of clay/george interaction in this chapter, but some angst. the climax approaches!

chapter title from "arcade" by duncan laurence!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"I hate everything," George said, his face in his desk.

"I can't do anything about that," Maia said, sounding amused. She was leaning on her forearms on the divider between their desks.

"At least the project's over." George lifted his head up.

"The day's over, too."

"My forehead's red, isn't it?"

"It is," she said, like she was suppressing a giggle.

He sat up straighter, rubbing at his forehead.

Maia reached over and flicked him. "You're still coming to the club, right?"

"Sure," George said.

"Try not to get *too* drunk, you lightweight," Maia said. She ducked back behind the divider, and George could hear her gathering her things together.

"I didn't drink much back home," he said.

"And it really, really shows. It's okay, though," she said, popping back up, "We can be lightweights together."

George reached out, and they linked pinkies. "We'll go drink for drink," he said.

"Sure," she said, and smiled. "Try to keep up."

Once they were out of the building, though, George felt his spirits declining once again.

"I don't know if I want to go to the club," he said in a bit of an undertone, looking ahead at their coworkers—raucous, loud, laughing.

Maia followed his gaze. "Have you been to the boardwalk yet?"

"The boardwalk? Sounds touristy," he said.

"It's not," she said. "It's really just a long stretch of wood. You'll see. And if you want to get drunk —" she rummaged around in her bag and produced a flask. "Ta-da."

"You just carry that around?"

"Duh," she said. They peeled off from the group, tossing out perfunctory goodbyes, obligatory see-you-on-Mondays. "What's been on your mind?"

"Boy troubles," he said, in a joking tone, and she laughed.

"Tell me about it," she sighed. "I have so much trouble talking to men." She paused. "And women."

"You don't seem to have a lot of trouble talking to me," he said, and her lips twitched.

"Give me that," she said, swiping the flask back from him. "Seriously, though, what's up? You haven't really seemed..." she made a vague gesture with her hands. "All that together lately."

"I guess I just haven't been getting enough sleep," he said, which was true.

"Too busy streaming?" She glanced sideways at him and smiled, nudging his shoulder with hers.

"You could say that," he said.

She looked contemplative. "Normally when I have trouble sleeping, I write, but..."

"I don't think I'm much of a writer."

"I'm glad you said it," she said, looping her arm through his.

When they got to the pier, Maia kicked off her heels and sighed in relief. George rolled his shirtsleeves up and tried not to think of the last time he'd been at a beach. "Pass me that, would you," he said, nodding to the flask.

She handed it over obligingly, and he took a generous swallow. "I feel like you're not telling me something," she said. "Which is fine, but, you know," she spread her hands. "Who am I going to tell?"

"Kara?" George passed the flask back to her. Already, he was starting to feel warmer, more light-headed, the alcohol spreading through his stomach and warming the back of his throat.

"Right," Maia said. "Kara and I routinely get together for coffee to talk about you, George Henry Davidson."

"How do you know my middle name?" George asked. Maia blushed.

"You're on Famous Birthdays," she said.

"You looked at my Famous Birthdays page?" He laughed, and her blush deepened.

"I was *curious*," she said, shoving him. "I watched some of your videos, and I sorta went down the rabbit hole."

"I never stalked you online," he said.

"As if I have an online presence to stalk," she said. She threw up a peace sign. "A hundred monthly

listeners on Spotify, babe.”

“That’s not nothing,” he said. “Everyone starts somewhere.”

She giggled. “Right. George not found.”

“How many of my videos did you watch?” George asked.

Maia’s blush got deeper. “Enough.”

“You watched all of them, didn’t you?”

“I did not!” She protested. “Just… the ten most recent.”

“Those are all like forty minutes long!” He nudged her. “I didn’t even think you played Minecraft.”

“I do play Minecraft!” She said. “Just not all the time.”

“Never change, Maia,” he said, feeling a rush of fondness for her. “I’m glad we’re friends.”

She smiled. “I’m glad we’re friends, too.”

There was a crack in his ceiling. It spread from one corner to the other, little, nearly imperceptible fault lines spidering from the large water stain he’d noticed a few weeks ago.

George’s eyes were red and sore. He’d been staring up at his ceiling for a couple of hours, trying to find sleep but utterly unable to. He got out of bed, picking up his phone on the way into the living room.

“George?” Sappnap’s voice was hoarse.

“Did I wake you up?”

“Yes,” Sappnap said, grumpy. “This better be an emergency.”

“I can’t sleep,” George said.

“Are you okay?”

“I don’t think so?” George raked a hand through his hair. “It’s… I’m sorry for waking you up.”

“It’s fine,” Sappnap said. “You might be a melodramatic asshole, but you’re *my* melodramatic asshole. C’mon, tell Daddy Sappnap your problems.”

“Please never call yourself that again,” George said. “And I’m not a melodramatic asshole.”

“You definitely are,” Sappnap said. “It’s okay, though. Is this about how you and Dream are in love, but too stupid to talk about it?”

“I’m not, he’s not, I mean,” George stammered. “It’s not like that.”

“Yeah, yeah, tell it to the judge,” Sappnap said. “For the record, you’re an idiot. You guys have

been flirting with each other since you *met*, practically.”

“It’s a bit,” George protested weakly.

“Right, because Dream constantly flirts with everyone on the SMP,” Sapnap said. “Just look at all the Dream and BadBoyHalo gay compilation videos.”

“It’s a *joke*, Sapnap,” George said, frustrated. “Sure. Let’s say... let’s assume I’ve been in love with Dream for the last four years. But even if I am in love with Dream, he’s just... it’s all a big joke to him.”

“I’m starting to think you don’t know Dream at all,” Sapnap said.

I’m afraid of all I am...

George blinked.

...my mind feels like a foreign land...

He tried to find the words. Numbly, he searched the edges of his room, and was suddenly aware that he was gripping the edge of his seat. “It sounds like you’re telling me that Dream hasn’t been joking this whole time.”

Silence ringing inside my head, please, carry me, carry me, carry me home...

“He tells you he loves you at least twice a stream,” Sapnap said.

“The operative word there is *stream*,” George said. “And he flirts with everyone.”

“Does he?” Sapnap asked, point-blank.

George wracked his brain. “I don’t know.”

... oh, all I know, all I know...

“I’m going back to bed,” Sapnap said. “Just think about it, yeah?”

“I will,” George said weakly. “Goodnight.”

...loving you is a losing game.

There was a shallow *beep* as Sapnap ended the call.

George sank to the floor and stayed there for a long time.

Chapter End Notes

as always, if you liked it (or if you didn't) please let me know! i try to respond to every comment i get :) see you next time!

i'd do whatever i could do, run away and hide with you

Chapter Notes

the end is in sight ;) chapter title from "daddy issues" by the neighbourhood

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

i'm so glad i'm quitting soon, was the first notification on George's screen when he woke up the next morning. *i don't know how i lasted at this job for this long without actually committing murder*

George blinked blearily at the messages. *Apple or your barista job?*

both, i guess, fuck

did you know i've been working for apple for two years now? and i've been a barista for longer

That's a long fucking time, George said. *Maybe you are due for a change of pace.*

can't come too soon

talk to you later?

George smiled down at his phone. *Try not to kill anyone today, Dream.*

no promises

god i hate this job

George really did laugh a little, though his amusement was tempered by the general anxiety he'd been feeling. He'd go to Peaches before work, he decided. Coffee never hurt. His head was pounding, and so was his heart, and he was ready to curl back into the covers and never come out.

But he went to Peaches, and the little bell over the door jingled, as it always did, and Clay gave him a warm smile when he walked in.

"One cold brew and one Americano, please," he told Clay.

"Well, hello to you, too," Clay said, punching it in. "You look terrible. What's up?"

"It's a bunch of things," George muttered, handing his credit card over.

Clay frowned as he swiped it and gave it back, careful not to let their fingers brush. "I'm sure it'll be okay," he said. He glanced at the clock, then around the shop. "You want to talk about it?"

George dragged his hand down his face. "One of my friends said something last night, and I'm still thinking about it."

"Can I ask what it was?" Clay asked, carefully adding milk to George's drink.

"He thinks he knows me better than I do," George muttered. "It's stupid."

“What do you think?” Clay looked up as he stirred.

“I think he’s full of shit,” George said immediately, then frowned. “But as much as I hate to admit it, he’s usually right about these things.”

“Sounds like you’ve done a lot of thinking already,” Clay said, passing George his drinks. “You want my advice?”

“Sure,” George said, accepting the cupholder.

Clay leaned on his forearms across the counter. “Just go with your gut.”

“You’re a regular daytime bartender,” George said, depositing a five in the tip jar.

“Bartenders make nighttime drinks, baristas make daytime drinks.” Clay watched him, looking for all the world like he was suppressing a smile. He picked up a rag and gave the counter a few cursory swipes. “See you tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” George said, lifting the cardboard cupholder in acknowledgement.

George was steadfastly grinding through spreadsheets when a voice startled him out of his stupor. “Hey.”

He looked up. Maia was leaning on the divider between their cubicles. “Hey.”

“Thanks for the coffee,” she said, raising her cup.

“Of course,” he said. “Least I could do was save you from the office stuff.”

“It’s not that bad,” she said. “But I do understand why you go to Peaches every morning. Among...” She paused. “...other reasons, I guess.”

“Right,” George said.

There was a beat of silence. George exhaled. “So, lunch?”

“I brought mine today,” she said with a smile. “So I can meet you in the break room. I have some news.”

Once they were seated with their food, Maia looked like she was ready to burst.

“What is it?” George asked.

She took a deep breath. “One of my songs went viral!”

“Viral?” He paused, as the words caught up to his brain. “Oh my god, which one?”

“Falling for U,” Maia said, bouncing in her seat. “Someone famous found it on Twitter, and now it’s everywhere!”

“That’s amazing,” George said slowly. “This is *amazing*, Maia.”

“I’ve never been more excited in my life,” she said, smiling ear-to-ear. “My Spotify’s gotten a hundred thousand more followers since yesterday, and it’s still going up...” She pulled out her phone. “See?”

“I’m so happy for you,” he said, meaning it. “You’re a great singer—and who knows where this could lead?”

“Thank you,” she said, blushing. “I’m just...” She trailed off.

“What?” George asked.

“I don’t know *what* ten-year-old Maia would say if she could see me now,” she said.

He smiled. “I think she’s proud of you.”

Maia smiled back at him conspiratorially. “I think so, too.”

“I’m quitting my job,” Dream announced, the next time George hopped on the Discord.

“Oh, for real this time?” George yawned.

“I submitted my two-weeks’ notice,” Dream said.

“Oh, wow,” George said. “So it’s real this time.”

“Yes, it’s real this time,” Dream said exasperatedly. “That’s what I’ve been *saying* .”

“You’ve also been saying you’re going to quit for weeks,” George pointed out. “Excuse me for not believing you the first—” he cut himself off as there was another telltale *ping* of someone else joining the call.

“Oh, Sapnap,” Dream said. “What’s up?”

“Are you guys on the server without me?” Sapnap asked.

“It’s... possible,” Dream said. George looked up at Dream’s avatar, currently building a fence, and had to suppress a snort.

“Rude,” Sapnap said.

Sapnap has joined the game, the chat read.

“I don’t know what’s the point of even joining,” he said, immediately running over. “I’m just going to be third-wheeling you guys the whole time.”

“That’s not true,” George protested, and this time Sapnap was the one to snort.

“Yeah, right, like when we were all on last week and we had to watch Dream flirt with you on stream,” he said.

“It was *not* flirting,” George said, trying to beam warning signals with his brain. “You know Dream likes to play it up for chat.”

“Right, for the stream.” George could practically hear Sapnap rolling his eyes.

“I’m hurt,” Dream piped up. “George, you don’t think I’m really flirting with you?”

“Not helping,” George said, thwacking Dream’s avatar with his sword. Dream laughed, hitting George back.

“Ah, no!” George started to run away. “You’re gonna kill me!”

“You shouldn’t have started a fight you couldn’t finish,” Dream said, but returned to building his fence.

“What is that even for?” George asked.

“It’s a railing, see,” Dream said.

“Right,” George said skeptically. “And you’ve encased Ponk’s lemon tree in it because...”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Dream said, not looking up.

“This is exactly what *I* was talking about,” Sapnap complained. He was breaking the fence as Dream placed it. “You’re both so annoying. Just kiss already.”

“Sapnap!” George hit him with the ax.

“I’m just trying to wear George down into admitting he loves me,” Dream said.

George blushed. “You’re full of shit, Dream.”

“I know,” Dream said.

There was an awkward beat.

“Oh, look at that,” Sapnap said abruptly. “Bad’s online. Gotta go, guys, he’s calling me.”

“But Bad’s not...” George trailed off as Sapnap left the call, and then the server.

“He’s probably gonna go jerk off or something,” Dream said, rebuilding the parts of his fence Sapnap had broken.

“He’s just jealous of what we have,” George supplied.

“Which is what?”

George stopped short. “...What?”

“What do we have, George?” Dream’s voice was teasing.

“We, well, I, uh...” George sputtered, then groaned. “You’re fucking with me.”

“Am I?” Dream’s voice tilted upwards a bit.

“Stop it,” George said, feeling his face heat up.

“No, I’m curious, what were you going to say?” Dream shifted and crept over to him.

“I was... I thought we were doing a bit,” George said.

“I don’t know if I believe you,” Dream said, the suggestive hint still in his voice.

George held his breath, words on his tongue: *I’m a little too invested in you. You’re always on my mind.* He exhaled. “Aren’t we always doing a bit?”

“Maybe *you* are,” Dream said, and the tension was gone, and it was just Dream again, his best friend. “I, personally, feel a little neglected.”

“Okay, fine, I love you,” George said. “Happy now?”

“Yesssss,” Dream cheered quietly. “Wait til I tell everyone.”

“No one’s going to believe you,” George said, fighting a smile.

Dream considered it. “You’re right, but *I’ll* know.”

“You already knew, numbskull,” George said, hitting him.

“I did,” Dream said. “It’s just nice to hear.”

They settled into silence for a few minutes, punctuated only by the sounds of blocks being broken and being placed. George peeked at Dream’s avatar, his back turned to George.

He watched as Dream stopped mining. “Hey, George,” he said.

“Yeah?”

“Check your sub count.”

“My… what? Where?”

“YouTube,” Dream said, and there was something odd in his voice.

George clicked away from Minecraft and pulled open YouTube. His hands were shaking. “Oh my god.”

“You have a million,” Dream said, gleeful. “You have a million subs!”

“I have a million subs,” George repeated. “I have—how do a *million* people want to see my content? This doesn’t even make *sense* .”

“Who cares?” Dream practically shouted. “You did it!”

“I did it,” George said, dumbfounded. “Dream, I did it!”

“You did, you did!” Dream bounced up and down. “I am so proud of you.”

“I’m *famous* now,” George said, and punched him. “You can tell people you’re friends with GeorgeNotFound—”

“—and they’ll be impressed—”

“—and they’ll give you all their money—”

“—and then I can coast off being GeorgeNotFound’s best friend for the rest of my life,” Dream finished, and then they were both laughing. A thought occurred to George, then, and he stopped short, the reality finally sinking in.

“Hey, you know what this means?” George asked.

“You’re doing your face reveal?”

“I guess I am, yeah.”

“How do you *feel*?”

“Um,” George said. His stomach felt like a pit. “Ask me later.”

“Are you nervous? You shouldn’t be.”

“Why not?” George turned away and broke a clump of leaves. “What if it’s... what if I disappoint people?”

“With your face?” Dream said. “Hm, I can see why you’d be concerned.”

“Wha—Dream!”

“I’m joking! I’m joking,” Dream said, laughing a little. “It’s going to be okay. For one thing, it doesn’t matter what you look like when you play Minecraft.”

“True,” George said.

“For another, I think you’re probably cute enough.”

“You’ve never seen me,” George said.

“How could you not be cute?” Dream said. “With such a winning personality.”

“Now you’re just teasing me,” George said.

“I’m not, though,” Dream said. “You’re smart, you’re kind, you’re humble, and you’re a good friend. You’re the best friend anyone could ever ask for.”

“People don’t,” George paused. “People don’t look like how they act. Or sound. I could be the ugliest person in the world, for all you know.”

“And even if you were, I’d love you anyway,” Dream said, matter-of-factly. “But I don’t think that’s true.”

“You always know what to say to make me feel better,” George said.

“You’re so dumb,” Dream said, and his voice was softer, fonder. “Of course I do.”

“Okay, arrogant,” George said, laughing a little.

“You love me, though,” Dream said, and George blushed.

“Yeah, yeah,” he said, finally, and ached a little, inwardly, under the weight of his want.

let me know what you think! your comments are the best part of my day. :)

you're pulling my heart, keeping me up in the dark

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "have you ever been in love" by the ivy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Mic—check.

Mouse—check.

Webcam—check.

“We’ll be here the whole time,” Dream encouraged. “You got this.”

“Okay,” George said, heart racing. “I’ve got this.”

“It’s not that bad,” Sapnap said. He’d done his face reveal a couple weeks earlier. “You’re going to break the internet.”

“Yeah, because he’s so ugly,” Dream said.

“You’ve never seen him,” Sapnap said, with the air of authority.

“Oh, and you have?”

“Shut up,” George said. “I’ll turn on the webcam in a bit. A few minutes into the stream or something.”

“Ooh, dramatic,” Dream said appreciatively.

“How does this not make you a dramatic asshole?” Sapnap asked.

“This is George’s *moment*, Sapnap,” Dream said.

George ignored all of this, doing a check of all the systems again. He took a deep breath, then pressed the button to go live. “Now we... wait.” He made sure the webcam was angled properly. “Oh, crap, I’m muted.” He unmuted. “Okay, I’m live, right?”

“Yes,” Dream said.

“I don’t...” he clicked out of the stream manager window. “Am I really?”

“Yes,” Dream said again.

“Can you...” he clicked back into the stream manager window. “Can you all hear me?”

People were trickling in, and the chat assured him that they could, in fact, hear him.

“Hello,” George said, hoping he didn’t sound as nervous as he felt. “Big things happening today.”

“Don’t get your hopes up,” Sapnap said, ostensibly to the chat.

“Please don’t get your hopes up,” George muttered, too low for the mic to pick up.

“What?” Sapnap said.

“Hello,” he said again. The stream was filling up rapidly now. “Oh, wow, thank you for the gifted subs already... thank you for the Twitch Prime!”

“Siiiiiiimps,” Sapnap said quietly.

“Don’t call my subs simps,” George said.

“The person who just donated to you is named ‘simpforgeorge,’” Sapnap said.

George went to look. “Oh. Huh. Okay, well, you can call *them* a simp, but no one else. Thank you for the dono, simpforgeorge!”

“I think you’re about to gain more simps,” Dream said.

“Army of simps,” Sapnap said.

“Maybe more like a cabal,” Dream suggested.

“How about a militia?”

“Guys,” George said. He was laughing a little now. “Hi, everyone, welcome to the stream! So, I hit a million, and you know what that means.” He paused for effect. “I’m doing a face reveal!”

One of his friends blew a party horn.

“Just have to set up my camera,” George lied, and tabbed out of Minecraft.

I'm having second thoughts again.

it's kind of too late to have second thoughts now

But what if I do disappoint them?

we talked about this

just remember what i said, okay?

George tabbed out of Discord, smiling now. “Okay, ready?”

“Just show us your face,” Dream said.

Chat was going frantic now, scrolling far too fast to even think about reading, much less catch any words.

“Three... two...” George hovered his finger over the button that would put his face front and center on the screen. “One!”

The webcam clicked on. George hoped he didn’t look too nervous as he smiled into the camera.

“So... this is me,” he said. “Hi, everyone.”

The chat went wild.

“Wow, George, you’re a cutie,” Sapnap said.

“Oh my god,” George said.

“He’s blushing!” Sapnap said gleefully. “Stream, can you see this?”

“I am *not* blushing,” George said.

“You definitely are,” Sapnap said. “Dream, you seeing this?”

Dream was silent, and George went and checked he was still in the call. “Dream?”

“Is your wifi down or something, man?” Sapnap asked.

“I think he’s muted,” George said.

“I’m—” Dream sounded choked. “I have to go.”

“Is everything okay?” George asked, concerned now.

“Yeah, everything’s fine.” Dream cleared his throat. “I’ll—I’ll talk to you later.”

Dream left the Discord call, and George and Sapnap sat in silence for a few seconds before Sapnap broke the silence by saying, “So, Bedwars?”

Are you okay?

What’s going on?

It had been four hours since the stream had ended, and Dream hadn’t responded to any of the thirteen texts George had sent him.

“Has he talked to you?” George asked.

Sapnap sighed, a long-suffering sound. “Yes.”

“And?”

“He’s fine,” Sapnap said. “Just a dumbass.”

The reactions to George’s face reveal had been intense. He’d trended on Twitter for a couple hours, had seen three fancams, and all anyone on Dream Team Twitter could talk about was the face reveal.

Thank you for all the love and support! Excited for what this next chapter holds for all of us, he’d tweeted, adding a little smiley face and an x to the end of the message.

“They’re talking about Dream,” Sapnap said. “Everyone thinks it’s weird that he just left your stream like that.”

“Of course they do,” George said. “Because it’s *weird*.”

“You might want to do damage control,” Sapnap said.

George frowned, scrolling through his replies. Half his replies were speculating on why Dream had left. A small group was trying to cancel him.

“Fucking hell,” he muttered, drafting a tweet.

Hey, guys, nothing happened between me and Dream. Definitely nothing you should bother him about haha. We're fine :)

“How has he just liked this when he hasn’t responded to any of my texts?” George asked, frustrated.

“He’ll probably talk to you later.” Sapnap paused. “Probably.”

“That’s not *good* enough,” George said.

“I agree with you, but there’s only so much I can—”

“—what’s he been saying?”

“Nothing I feel right telling you,” Sapnap muttered.

“What?”

“Nothing,” Sapnap said. “I said nothing. I’ll try to talk to him, okay? That’s the most I can promise.”

“Okay,” George said, and put his face in his hands. “I just want to know if I *did* something.”

“You didn’t,” Sapnap said. “I promise, you didn’t do anything.”

“I hope he texts me back soon,” George said.

“Yeah,” Sapnap said. “Me, too.”

A day passed, then two, and then it was a workday, and George walked right by Peaches in his distraction. Dream still hadn’t responded to any of his texts or calls, and George felt like he was living in a haze, everything narrowed to a single point in front of him.

It’s Tuesday, he texted Dream. *Long weekend in the states, but I guess you know that.*

Please text me back.

Before he knew it, it was Friday again, unofficial Dream Team stream day, and he hadn’t spoken to Dream in a week.

“He has to talk to me, right?” George said to Sapnap, frustrated.

“You can’t bring it up on stream,” Sapnap warned him.

“I’m not *stupid*,” George said. “Of course I won’t.”

Still, he bristled with impatience as they waited for him to join the call, and finally Sapnap just started the stream without him.

They were building a redstone contraption when Dream joined the SMP.

“Oh, look who finally decided to show up,” Sapnap said.

"I'm *sorry* that some of us work for a living," Dream said, and tossed a flower at him. "Does this satisfy you, your Clinginess?"

"Perhaps," Sapnap said primly. "I think I need another favor of your esteem."

George stayed quiet through the exchange. Hearing Dream's voice had sent a wave of emotion through him, and he wasn't sure he liked it.

"What are you guys up to?" Dream bounded over to him and shifted.

"We're working on some redstone stuff," George said, struggling to modulate his voice. "Sam sent me a guide earlier today, so we've been trying to figure it out."

"Ah, yes." Dream nodded. "Sam, the redstone master."

"Dream's not even joking, for people in the chat who don't know," Sapnap said. "Sam is a redstone god."

"What are you trying to get it to do?"

"We're trying to make a secret labyrinth," George said. "Once it's done, we're going to send Tommy through it."

Dream laughed. It sounded forced to George, but he doubted chat would notice. "Oh, that's good."

"So *help* us," Sapnap said, punching him.

"Okay, okay!" Dream laughed. "What do you need?"

"Redstone," George said, the least curt he could make his voice sound. "We're running out."

"You're doing a redstone thing and you're *running out* of redstone?" Dream asked.

"We didn't prep too much," Sapnap admitted. "Pleeeeeease, Dream?"

"Anything for you idiots," Dream said. "George?"

"I'm going to work on the walls some more," George said.

"Clay what?" George asked.

"Clay doesn't work here anymore," the Peaches barista explained again, patient as anything. She glanced behind her, then leaned in. "I know you two were close, so I'm going to tell you even though I shouldn't, but his last day was a couple days ago."

"Yesterday..." George shook his head. "Why didn't he..."

Her gaze was sympathetic. "I don't know why he didn't tell you."

"Do you know why he quit?" George asked. "He didn't get fired, did he?"

"No, he didn't get fired." She shrugged. "He said something better came up. Honestly, I wasn't

going to question it.”

“Something better,” George murmured, turning it over in his head. “Okay. Thanks. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” she said. “Do you want anything?”

“Um, just a latte,” George said. “Thanks.”

He picked up his drink and walked away, barely looking where he was going. Clay had quit his job because of something better. Hadn’t Dream hit six million recently?

“What made you give up on it?”

“Who says I did?”

The pieces were all there, but George didn’t know if he believed it, or even if he wanted to believe it.

“You hate working for Apple.”

“There are other benefits.”

He didn’t know if he *could* believe it.

“I’m a barista.”

The last puzzle piece clicked into place, and George stopped in his tracks.

For a second, when Clay had laughed, he had almost sounded like Dream.

He blinked. The empty coffee cup fell from his hand, and he stooped to pick it up, his mind racing. Before he knew it, he had pulled out his phone, and was drafting a text.

Clay

Meet me behind Peaches

He didn’t have to wait very long for a response.

okay

i’ll meet you there in twenty.

Chapter End Notes

we're reaching the end :0 please leave a comment if you liked it (or didn't), i try to respond to every one and your comments are the best part of my day :) <3

i've also published a short dnf angst one-shot, it's called "ultimately" and if you like my writing you should check that out, too!

and i know myself, and i'll never love anyone else

Chapter Notes

merry christmas motherfuckers. if you don't celebrate christmas, i hope you have a wonderful holiday!

anyway here it is. the one we've all been waiting for

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George waited. He tapped his fingers on his phone anxiously. His heart was beating in double-time, a kind of fury lighting his veins ablaze. He turned, and Clay was *there*, standing next to a dumpster, looking the same way he always did—closed off, guarded.

Before, George had always assumed Clay was a reserved person, but now, looking past it all, he could see bits and pieces of his best friend in Clay's mannerisms, the way he carried himself, and he cursed himself out for not realizing it sooner.

"I know," he said, before Clay could say anything. "I know you're Dream."

The words hung in the air long enough for George to become very afraid that he'd miscalculated.

"I'm sorry," Clay said.

"For what?" George challenged.

"For not telling you," Clay said. "I should've said something sooner—"

"Yeah, you should've—"

"—and I get that you're mad at me because I didn't tell you—"

"I'm not mad you didn't tell me," George said. There were tears in his eyes, and he kept running his hands through his hair. "No, you know what, I am angry. You *let* me keep thinking that you hated me for no reason, you shut me out—"

"What was I supposed to do?" Clay spun away from him. "I found out that my best friend had been — had been—"

"Had been *what*, Dream?"

"You know how I feel—"

"Apparently, I don't," George said. "Apparently, I don't know you at all—"

"—don't say that, of course y—"

"—how am I supposed to feel when I do a face reveal and you just leave the internet?" George asked. "I thought... I thought..."

He stopped. Clay turned.

“You thought what?” Clay asked.

“It doesn’t matter what I thought,” George muttered.

“Clearly, it does, or we wouldn’t be having this conversation right now,” Clay said.

“I *hate* that you’re so self-righteous all the time,” George said. “It’s always your plan, you always know something that you won’t tell anyone, and—”

“I told Sapnap,” Clay said.

“You... told Sapnap,” George said, slowly.

“I told him everything.” Clay shuffled in place. “And he told me... some things.”

“What is everything? What did Sapnap tell you?”

“I told him about... us. About Peaches.” Clay took a step closer. His gaze was intense, and George shivered before shaking his head violently.

“I don’t understand why you wouldn’t just... I get why you left the stream, but you ignored me for so *long*. I thought you hated me.”

“I don’t,” Clay said. “I would never.”

“Don’t say that,” George said. “Don’t make promises you can’t—”

“I was *scared*, okay?”

His words seemed to echo through the alley, and George found himself at a loss for words.

“Scared of—scared of what?”

“George,” Clay said, and he sounded tired, the most tired George had ever heard him sound.

“Don’t you know how I feel by now?”

“I’ve never known how you feel about anything,” George said. “You’re extraordinarily hard to read.”

“You know me better than anyone,” Clay said.

“That can’t be true,” George said.

“Well, it is,” Clay said.

George stilled. A breeze ruffled his hair. Something about this moment felt profound, his heart beating past the point of no return. “*I’m starting to think you don’t know Dream at all*,” Sapnap said, in the back of his mind, and he squeezed his eyes shut, tight, unwilling to voice what he was thinking, unwilling to be wrong.

“Just tell me,” he said finally, faintly.

“You already know, George,” Clay said, the words a challenge. George turned to face him.

“Stop playing mind games with me,” he said. “You *told* me there was someone else.”

Clay shook his head, and stepped close enough that his breath was warm on George’s nose. “It’s

not a game,” Clay said, and kissed him.

George ripped away and sucked in a violent breath. “I swear, Clay, if this is just a giant joke to you —”

“George, I wouldn’t—” Clay reached for him again, but he twisted away. “George.”

George looked at him.

“I rejected you because I was in love with GeorgeNotFound,” Clay said. “I’m in love with *you*.”

George blinked. “So when you said there was someone else...”

“I was talking about you,” Clay said.

Gentle fingers tipped his chin up. “Dream,” he said, like a plea, and Clay’s lips came crashing down on his in a searing kiss.

It was nothing like the gentle kisses they’d shared on the beach. George felt himself being swept away, lost desperately in the undertow of Clay’s hands, running through his hair, grasping his waist, until it felt like there was nothing else in the world but the two of them, kissing next to a dumpster in the middle of downtown Miami.

They broke apart, George’s face still in the clasp of Clay’s hands. “I wouldn’t lie to you about this,” Clay said quietly. “If you don’t feel—”

“How could I not?” George said. “How could I not, when you’re constantly...” He trailed off.

“Constantly what?”

George bit his lip and looked away, then back at Clay. In the lines of his face he saw familiarity, and finally, he thought he understood.

“Clay,” he said, then— “Dream.”

Clay—Dream—looked at him with that agonizingly soft expression, the one he’d always used when George would come into Peaches, and if he’d spoken, George would recognize the tone of his voice as belonging to their late night calls, the easy fondness of long-wrought friendship. George wanted to cry and laugh at the same time. He wanted Dream to sweep him up in the circle of his arms and never let go. He wanted the late nights and the mornings and the tender, early afternoons spent tracing love notes into each other’s skin. He thought of late night calls, and mundane trips to Costco, and laughing, just laughing, under the stars, sand in crevices he hadn’t known existed but being perfectly content, all the same.

He thought all of these things, and he thought that he maybe should’ve known all along. He pressed his hand over Dream’s heart, and he hoped the other man would be able to pick up on the words he didn’t say.

“Come home with me,” George said, and hoped Dream would hear the *i love you*, the *please stay with me forever and never leave*, the *i want you for now and always*.

Dream’s answering smile was luminescent and real, and as he dipped his head to kiss George again, George didn’t think he’d ever get tired of this feeling, the slow pressure of Dream’s lips saying back to him, *i love you, i love you, i love you*, like a litany, like a prayer.

There would be more time to talk later, more time to explain—but right now, all George wanted was this. “Come home with me,” he repeated.

All the things he couldn’t say were falling on the ground at his feet, and he thought Dream could hear them, too, because he looked back up and met George’s gaze with those yellowy eyes that took his breath away, traced a thumb over his cheek, and said, gently, “I’m driving.”

Chapter End Notes

the last chapter will just be a short epilogue! uploading it very soon :) in the meantime, let me know what you think! satisfied? unsatisfied?

do you wonder if every stupid little thing has led us to this?

Chapter Notes

epilogue title from "beige" by yoke lore

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hey,” someone whispered to him.

“Hey,” he said sleepily, twisting up to meet a pair of lips pressed to his forehead, warm and inviting. “I missed you.”

“I was just in the bathroom,” Clay said. “Move over.”

George did, and Clay shivered violently as he slid under the comforter. “You’ve been toasting here.”

“I like to be warm,” George said. Clay held out an arm, and George gladly nestled into him, reaching down to entwine their fingers together. “Sorry I don’t like to shiver under my sheets like you.”

Clay sighed exasperatedly. “Not my fault I run hot.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know, you’re *hot*, Clay,” George said, pressing his warm toes into Clay’s cold calves. “Where did you go to the bathroom, in the Arctic?”

“You caught me,” Clay said. “I went to the Arctic and back in about ten minutes to use the bathroom. Just to get away from how *warm* it is in here. What did you even set the thermostat to, ninety degrees?”

“Seventy-two,” George protested.

Clay made a sound of great aggravation and moved to get out of the bed, but George held onto him tight, meeting his amused gaze with a pleading one of his own. “Fine,” Clay said, with a long-suffering sigh. “The things I do for you.”

“Mm, but you love me,” George said. Clay kissed his forehead again.

“Yeah, yeah, you know I do.”

“I love you, too,” George said, tucking his head into the crook of Clay’s neck, and Clay sighed and held him closer. George could hear the smile in his voice when he responded.

“I know.”

They lay in quiet contentment for a few minutes. George was just drifting off again when Clay spoke. “Are we planning on getting up at all today?”

“Do we have to?” George asked. “You’re so cozy.”

“You’re a bad influence,” Clay said. “Aren’t you supposed to meet Maia later?”

George made a grouchy sound. “Yes.”

“And I have to record a video,” Clay said. George made another unhappy noise, and Clay ran a hand down his back soothingly. “I’ll still be here when you get back, George.”

“I know,” George grumbled, still hiding in Clay’s neck. “We should stream together later.”

“The DreamNotFound shippers will lose their shit,” Clay said.

“They know we live together,” George said, hiding a smile. “You’re not even ever in frame of my facecam.”

Clay laughed. “Maybe I’ll mess with you for fun.”

“You better not,” George said. Clay laughed again and kissed him.

“I’m so in love with you,” he said, when he broke away, their noses still touching.

“I love you,” George whispered, kissing him again. Was everything glowing? It felt like everything was glowing, filling the room with love and warmth.

Clay kissed his nose, lightly. “I’ll see you later tonight, then?”

“Always,” George said, and meant it.

Chapter End Notes

that's it! the end.

i hope you all liked it as much as i loved writing it—this fic was just a joy to write, and seeing all your comments really reminds me why i got into writing in the first place. i have the best readers in the world.

thank you so much for the journey, and i hope you'll stick around. i love you all.

catch me on tumblr @lvbytes!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!